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An Exploration of Gender Issues and the Role of the Outsider in Women's Education Programs in Muslim Communities Case Studies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen

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in
Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen

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To Dad, Mom, Brad, and the memory of Shirley Walp ,
without your support this endeavor would not have been possible,

To Gladys Lawther, my inspiration,

and

To the women of Tamaské, Niger, who are
my "teachers," my "mothers," and my friends.

CONTENTS

TABLES

Note to the Reader:

Arabic words are printed in italics with definitions and explanations noted at the bottom of each page in footnote form. Most of these explanations were derived from the glossary of Denny's book entitled, *An Introduction to Islam* (1994).

There are two ways in which the literature spells the Prophet's name: Mohammed, and Muhammed. I have utilized the spelling Muhammed as referenced in the Qur'an, unless in a direct quote from another source.

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This study represents a synthesis of my academic study, overseas experience, and independent investigation over the past five years of my life. There have been many individuals and communities who have enriched and guided this journey of greater understanding, and I am indebted to them all.

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CHAPTER ONE - OVERVIEW OF STUDY

Statement of Problem

There is a need for international program planners to seriously consider the cultural and religious aspects of women's lives when designing and implementing educational programs which involve them. The absence of information, or misunderstanding, of cultural and religious elements so integral to women's lives, can be detrimental to project objectives. Many development programs which aim to provide education to women face gender issues that either aid or hinder programs. Change agents are often unaware of these gender issues and misunderstand the relationship between culture, religion, and the role of women.

While working in Niger, I became familiar with many development programs that work with women. I found that cultural bias led to misunderstanding local culture and religion. Frequently, "outsiders" blame project failure on elements of the Islamic religion they felt were in opposition to women's involvement in educational initiatives. This was a very frustrating experience. Islam is often viewed in the eyes of the outsider as oppressive to women. Frequently, development workers discuss male resistance to women's programs, negative attitudes of men, and inhibiting forces of religious institutions as a constraint for women's educational activities. Rarely though, are efforts taken to explore this resistance and these attitudes in the context of century-old religious and cultural traditions. As Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi so appropriately stated, "... you have to be careful when dealing with the Muslim world, not to confuse the symptom, that is, the event (the only

dimension the media are interested in), with the diagnosis, that is, the specific combination of forces, tendencies, compromises, and alliances which produce it" (1987: xiv).

Purpose

The primary purpose of this study was to discover the key gender issues that confront a sampling of programs that work with women's education in predominantly Muslim communities, and to ascertain how development workers and participants address and confront and resolve these issues. This study also was intended to determine how an increased understanding of gender issues rooted in cultural and religious tradition can inform program planning and implementation.

My interests in exploring issues related to Muslim women in educational development have played an important role in the past five years of my life since I worked for two years in women's literacy and numeracy programs in rural areas of northern Niger, West Africa. Since my return to the United States, and my pursuit of higher education, I have been undergoing a process of self-education about Islam, an element so integral to the lives of women with whom I worked in Niger. This study has enabled me to come to terms with how the knowledge of gender issues and their cultural and religious roots could have informed my work with Muslim women in Niger and with Muslim communities in the future. My initial assumptions about the insight into religious knowledge on behalf of the non-Muslim outsider, for the benefit of promoting and implementing Muslim women's educational programs has been disproved. This will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Procedure

This study has been informed by the vast literature on gender issues and women in development. It will begin by presenting a selection of gender issues present in the literature regarding women's education and development. This brief review has informed the selection of several key issues which will be briefly defined in this paper. A list of these key gender issues was prepared, and utilized as a basis for discussion with four interview sources.

The bulk of the research for this study was derived from interviews. It was my preference while conducting this research to seize the opportunity and learn about the experiences of my colleagues at the University of Massachusetts' Center for International Education, who have worked with various women's educational programs in predominantly Muslim communities around the world. Program directors and administrators that have worked in women's educational projects in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen were my primary sources (see Appendix A).

An interview questionnaire was developed (see Appendix B) and used as a guideline for what resulted as open-ended discussion. As colleagues and friends, we were able to discuss the topic openly in comfortable, relaxed settings. While the questionnaire served as a guide, it did not confine the discussions, and they were very informal and candid. The gender issues discussed in the first portion of the study were presented to these interview sources in list form (see Appendix C), and the sources were asked to discuss their relationship to these issues and the project with which they were involved. In a closed-interview procedure, the interviewees were then asked to analyze these issues and to indicate which of them were of most important or prominent within their project and were asked to explain how these issues were dealt with. Thus, a

combination of open and closed interview techniques were utilized for this study.

The information derived from these core interviews was formulated into a set of case studies in Chapter Three. A system of color coding the transcripts according to the different issues discussed, and the program itself, enabled the author to identify the information from the interviews that would be most relevant to the case studies. The cases each present background information, and a description of the program. This is followed by the identification of the gender issues that the sources felt were the most prominent within each program. This is then accompanied by a brief discussion of how these gender issues were dealt with and resolved within each project. This exploration of a sampling of specific programs has demonstrated ways that different actors at the management level, and at the grassroots level deal with these gender issues. An attempt was made to include direct quotations from the transcripts frequently, so the reader can gain insight into the personality and voice of each interview source. The analysis of the information provided by these case studies is included at the end of Chapter Three. A series of tables helps to organize the infomation for the reader, but aims to maintain a qualitative character to the data.

Limitations

The literature on gender issues, women in development, and women in Islam is rich and vast. This study will only briefly discuss various gender issues present in the literature regarding women's education and development, and will rely heavily on the information derived from human resources and specific case studies. The review of the literature that is presented in the selection of several key issues is unfortunately limited. Ideally, the reader will be prompted to delve

further into this subject, and continue an ongoing investigation of the current and forthcoming literature on gender, religion, and development.

My personal area of interest and experience working with Muslim women is in Niger and Francophone West Africa. Yet the primary sources for this study are program directors and administrators who have worked in women's educational projects in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen. I chose to focus on these case studies from around the world because of the rich human resources available at the Center for International Education and their willingness to share their experiences.

This sampling of case studies is an eclectic mix of different contexts, cultures, languages, geographic areas, Islamic practices, and political situations. The fact that there are differences with regard to attitudes and issues regarding women's education between countries and also within countries must be recognized. These cases in no way attempt to represent a comprehensive view of gender issues in Muslim communities worldwide. The study does not generalize any of the following case studies, but rather presents them to the reader as a sampling of the rich variety of possible gender issues that may or may not be faced by women's educational programs in predominantly Muslim communities around the world. These cases are intended to provide the reader with specific examples of educational programs which confronted various gender issues, and their strategies for dealing with and resolving these issues. Although the presentation of these cases aims to aid the reader in gaining an overview of the possible situations program planners may confront working in predominantly Muslim communities with women's programs, it does not intend to be comprehensive.

It must also be recognized that the key gender issues as presented may always be present to some degree, either implicitly, or explicitly, in women's

educational programs. They may sometimes be considered as hindrances with regard to the ease of program organization, planning, and administration. At other times, these same gender issue may be viewed as advantages or assets to program implementation.

By illuminating the key gender issues in the case studies that follow, the objective was not to generalize what are the most prevalent issues that must be dealt with when working with Muslim women. Rather, the cases and key gender issues within them are presented in hopes that they will be reviewed on an individual basis, taking into consideration the specific situation, context, timing, and conditions within which the project operated. There may be some common strands with regard to implications for programming, and these will be discussed.

The final chapter of this study focused on it's implications. This analysis is limiting for the reader in that it is based upon my personal experiential learning cycle. This process of clarifying the role of the "outsider" and the use of religious knowledge as a tool will greatly benefit my work with women's educational programs in so-called "developing" countries in the future. This study has informed my personal work with women's educational programs in Niger, and will continue to shape my perspectives on gender in Muslim communities. Thus it is the reader's responsibility to glean from this analysis and these implications, useful information which could be adapted and modified for other contexts.

CHAPTER TWO - GENDER AND MUSLIM WOMEN'S EDUCATION

This chapter will begin by placing the discussion of gender issues within the context of gender and development, women's education in international development, and women in Islam. Following this explanation, will be a brief discussion of the key gender issues pertaining to Muslim women's educational programs. The issues outlined are: (1) social norms, (2) resistance to changing female roles, (3) access to education, (4) sex segregation of education, (5) sex of the teacher/facilitator, (6) organization/logistics of educational programs, (7) curriculum /content of educational programs (8) effect of women's education on family life, and (9) sustainability. These key issues were used to guide the interviews for this study, and created a common framework among the sources from which to discuss gender issues within the women's educational programs that will be explored in the four case studies and analyses in Chapter Three.

Gender and Development

Decision makers in governments and donor agencies worldwide are recognizing the inclusion of women in the development process as essential to any national development strategy. In 1970, Ester Boserup's book entitled *Women's Role in Economic Development* served as a doorway to more than two decades of literature on women and development. The literature and development initiatives have shifted over the years.

The Women in Development (W.I.D.) movement of the 1980's which is rooted in liberal feminism looked at women's opportunities and constraints with

a focus on women exclusively. The W.I.D. camp believed in the integration of women into the existing development process by creating avenues which increase women's productivity, income, and ability to look after the household. Yet the W.I.D. initiative failed to improve the status of women, and frequently had a negative impact on their economic and social lives. In addition, the W.I.D. approach to women's inclusion in the development process tended to be segregated, tacked on, and "ghettoized" thus alienating and threatening men in the process, and often defining men as the source of oppression.

The 1990's have ushered in a new system for discussing women's role in national development within the framework of gender. This approach is often called Gender and Development (G.A.D.) and is concerned with equitable, sustainable development with both women and men as decision makers in the process. By focusing on the relationships between men and women, it is looking at the system of gender socialization, and not exclusively the role of men as the source of oppression as the W.I.D. approach did. The G.A.D. camp addresses the problem of unequal relationships of power that prevent equitable development and women's participation, and seeks to empower disadvantaged women by transforming unequal gender relations. As Lise Østergaard noted in *Gender and Development, A Practical Guide:*

> The concept of Women in Development is concrete and may lead to marginalizing women as a particular species with inherited handicaps. The concept of Gender in Development is abstract and opens up for the realization of women's productive potentials in development (1992: 7).

It is this current perspective of Gender and Development that informs this study. It was my objective to review the literature in order to extract prominent gender issues pertaining to women's education. For the purpose of this study, I

define "gender issues" as the results, consequences, or points of contention of the socially constructed classification of male and female roles, characteristics, and abilities. Because gender is not fixed biologically, but is socially constructed, the views regarding the roles of men and women vary greatly from one place or culture to another, and they also may change over time. Attempting to understand both women's and men's roles and views gives a richer and more complete picture of women's educational programs. Therefore the gender issues presented need to be viewed in the light of both sexes, not just women.

Women's Education

At the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Thailand, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and 156 nations recommitted themselves to goals of providing education for all in so-called developing countries throughout the world. "Every person - child, youth, and adult - shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs" (UNICEF 1992). Widening access to education has been a major policy goal in many developing countries since the 1960's. Much emphasis has been placed on female literacy in an attempt to reduce the current disparity between male and female literacy rates. Yet the gender gap in education still exists in many so-called developing countries, and women's education lags far behind men's.

The evidence is vast that educating women has many positive benefits: educated women generally marry later in life; are more likely to have smaller families than those who are not educated; are more likely to educate their

children especially their daughters; are more likely to consider health, nutrition, water, and sanitation issues; have an increased self esteem, are more productive; and have an effect on the decrease of mortality among children (Rihani 1992, Jabre 1988, UNICEF 1992, CAII 1994). Benefits multiply when education is available to girls and women as well as boys and men. "Failing to invest adequately in the education of women can even reduce the potential benefits of educating men" (Hill and King 1993).

Conducting extensive empirical research in 152 countries, Hill and King were able to determine strong links between the education of women and national development. They were able to ascertain by looking at indicators such as measures of literacy, enrollment, and years in school, that the level of female education is low and the gender gap is largest in the poorest countries (with few exceptions). Their study on the gender gap in education assessed considerable negative effects of gender disparities in education and social and economic development. Although their study looks in depth at formal school and the education of girls, we are able to glean significant information about the education of women in the nonformal school sector as well.

The term "female education" can often address educational opportunities for three different groups: young unmarried girls who are enrolled in primary or secondary level education; teenage girls who are unmarried and out of school (who may or may not have had some formal education); and women (both married and unmarried) who cannot read or write and who have had little or no formal education. For the purpose of this study, the term women's education addresses female adults. Adults could mean married girls as young as fourteen, unmarried, or widowed women. Most of the case studies that will be looked at in Chapter Three deal with a literacy component to an integrated rural development program, or they deal specifically with women's literacy.

Islamic teachings anddoctrine are very pro - education for both sexes. The education of both women and men is encouraged the *Hadith* [1] literature, stating that every Muslim should pursue knowledge throughout life, even if it should lead the seeker to China (al Faruqi 1988). The Qur'an also implies the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. For example, "It commands all readers to recite, to think, to contemplate, as well as to learn from the signs of Allah in nature" (al Faruqi 1988). At the end of the nineteenth century, the necessity of educating women was strongly argued by two Egyptian male Muslim intellectuals. Rifà'a al Tahtawi (1872) and Qasim Amin in his book,*The Emancipation of Women* (1899) stressed women's intellectual abilities and argued that education would make them better Muslims, better mothers and educators of their children, and better wives (Directorate-General for International Cooperation - DGIS 1993). Amin's support of women's education and his advocacy for un-veiling may appear to have been revolutionary. However, as Leila Ahmed (1994) discussed, Amin's stance is couched in the belief of the superiority of Western culture. She argued that feminism has played handmaid to colonialism, and we must understand these early proponents of the condition of women within a broader context.

[1] "Report", "event", "news" A literary form that communicates the custom, usual procedure, or way of acting for the Prophet Muhammad.

Women and Islam

As mentioned in the overview, one of the elements of this study is to examine particular gender issues in women's educational programs in predominantly Muslim communities. While the limitations have already been mentioned, I would like to re-emphasize the fact that this is not a theological dissertation. This study will not adequately discuss the complexities of the Islamic faith. Nor will there be an attempt to make value judgments or adopt a political standpoint with regard to Islam. Rather, it is a modest effort in understanding how certain gender issues may be viewed by Muslim development workers, practitioners, and administrators; and to discuss how these issues impact the education of Muslim women. Islam has an influence on the development process. Yet one must constantly recognize that religion is just one factor in the consideration of the condition of women. Religion is intertwined with the overarching political, historical, social, and cultural contexts of a country.

The Moroccan sociologist and Islamic feminist, Fatima Mernissi noted, "The controversy has raged throughout this century between traditionalists, who claim Islam prohibits any changes in the sexes' roles, and the modernists who claim that Islam allows for the liberation of women, the desegregation of society, and the equality of the sexes" (1975: xv). While this debate is very intriguing, this study is not an attempt to define the position of Muslim women, nor to analyze the merits or demerits of gender roles in Islam.

As historian Denny (1994) clearly discussed in his book entitled, *An Introduction to Islam* , at a base, Islam is a profound religious belief and action system with great spiritual appeal to both women and men. The revelation of the Qur'an may be seen as quite liberating to women. According to Muslim

teaching, males and females are of equal status before God, and enjoy equal religious duties and privileges (Qur'an Sura 33:35). Denny continued by explaining, "Muslim feminists - that is sincere Muslim monotheists who believe in the truth of the Qur'an's message and Muhammed's teaching, are calling for a return to the Qur'an as the ultimate and sufficient source for a renewed and egalitarian Islamic social order where males and females enjoy equal dignity and rights" (1994: 354).

There is often a difference though, between prevailing religious norms and laws on the one hand, and everyday practice on the other. Many Muslims have little knowledge of Islamic doctrine. This is due to the fact that religious scholars, *Imam s* [2] and *Mullahs* [3] are considered the only authorities on the religious texts and their interpretation. Illiterates and females especially are frequently dependent upon these male scholars as the sole providers on information on religious issues. They rely upon these religious leaders' knowledge and seek out their guidance and assistance rather than personal consultation with religious texts. As a result, certain practices may be presented as Islamic by different religious leaders, while perhaps they are not. Rural villagers may have their own ideas of what is Islamic which can be far removed from the official teachings (DGIS: 1993). The DGIS study (1993), emphasized that religious norms, interpretations, and customs may in some cases impose restrictions on Muslim women but that in other cases, they may afford them the scope to improve their situation.

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[2] "leader" as in the formal prayer-worship service observed five times daily. An Imam may also be a religious teacher with no special sacrality.

[3] Persian form of *mawla,* "master" of religious sciences and member of the *Ulama'* or learned class of religious and legal scholars.

Key Gender Issues

Social Norms

All communities or groups of people have implicit social norms which serve as a standard or model of behavior for the group at large. These norms are not taught explicitly, but learned naturally as society defines acceptable behaviors, attitudes, and actions. This study examined women's educational programs in predominantly Muslim communities. While the cultures of each country and region are vastly different, the unifying foundation of the Islamic belief system exists for each. Each region however, has different religious traditions, practices, and attitudes about the role of women that are intricately woven with local culture. These variations have a lot to do with historical background and the manner in which Islam spread throughout the world. Islam has become a major world religion in conversion by both conquest and peaceful preaching. In Africa for example, "Islam has tried to accommodate the indigenous beliefs and practices, producing a faith that is not so formally strict as that in some of the long-established Muslim countries of the Middle East" (Denny: 1994). Indeed, it is difficult if not impossible to isolate religion from culture in Muslim communities where Islam is a way of life and the blend of religion and local culture shapes women's lives.

For the purpose of this study, social norms was selected as a gender issue to discuss during the interviews because of the impact these norms have on what society views as acceptable or unacceptable patterns of behavior for the members of it's communities. The cases focus in particular on the social norms regulating gender roles and impacting Muslim women's educational programs. As mentioned, social norms differ from context to context. Yet when we examine the situations within the Muslim communities of this study, it becomes clear that

certain attitudes regarding gender roles are common or similar among them. For example, most women in so-called developing countries world-wide, have extensive household and child-rearing responsibilities. Social norms may prescribe that it is the role of women to be in the home and in the private sphere rather than the public sphere. Yet, the DGIS study noted, segregation of the sexes was not introduced by Islam, but was commonly practiced in the Middle East before it's advent. "In fact, the prophet Muhammed was criticized for allowing women more freedom of movement in the public domain than was customary" (1993: 12). And, "Segregation of the sexes occurs in all Muslim communities, but the degree to which this is a hindrance to women varies considerably" (1993: 68).

In the UNESCO-UNICEF document entitled, *Women's Education in Africa* (1988) for example, certain attitudes regarding participation are outlined as an obstacle to girls' and women's education. These attitudes, deeply rooted in social norms can impact negatively upon aprogram, especially if they are held by influential members of a community. Yet sometimes positive attitudes regarding participation such as the support from a local Mullah in Senegal helped to ignite the TOSTAN female literacy program (D. Fredo personal communication, April 24, 1995).

In rural areas where traditions may be upheld more vehemently, many girls marry at a young age. This tradition supports the role of women in the home and often takes priority over educating women. Yet Hill and King (1993) have noted that many societies view the education of young women as a positive factor in marriage, and better-educated young girls can claim a higher bride-price. Yet other social consensus seems to have emerged in their findings that educating girls in Western schools is bad for girls and society on the whole. It is these kinds of norms and attitudes that impact the social constructs of gender

and may serve as barriers or benefits to Muslim women's educational programs. These social norms, whether rooted in religion, culture, or a blend of both, instill attitudes and behaviors regarding the role of women. These social norms influence the attitudes communities may have about women's educational programs, and may possibly result in resistance to changing female roles.

Resistance to Changing Female Roles

In his book entitled, *Islam and the Cultural Accommodation of Social Change* (1991), Bassam Tibi presented an in-depth examination of the interplay between social and cultural change and the exploration of Islam as a cultural system. According to the orthodox Islamic perspective, the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammed is the ultimate truth, valid for all times, all religions, and the whole of humanity (Qur'an: Sura 33 verse 40). Tibi addresses the question of whether or not Islam represents an obstacle to change based upon the interpretation of the above conception of Islam in a continually changing interdependent global society.

> Islam as a cultural system has been adopted by non-Arabs and integrated into non-Islamic, indigenous, previously existing symbolic systems. It goes without saying that the resulting religiocultural synthesis is different in each case, which totally contradicts the fundamentalist orthodox concept of the timeless cultural entirety of Islam. [24] [referenced Geertz 1973: 99] This tension between the sacred concept of reality and reality itself is reflected in the tension between legal and popular Islam. The former is the source of the legal provisions, of the model for reality; the average Muslim, however, this tension does not exist, and most Muslims believe that they live in accordance with Islamic law (Tibi 1991: 22).

Tibi's hypothesis is that Muslims do not consciously face the question of coping with social change, and indeed that they do not ask the question at all, although it directly affects their everyday life. He defined the role of education as a process of socialization , and stated that Muslim learning institutions transmit a specific orientation which does not prepare for change, but for stabilization.

Most Muslim men and women have at least some schooling from Muslim learning institutions or *madrassa.* These *madrassa* schools do not divorce the training of the mind from that of the soul and the whole being of the person (Haddad, Haines, and Findly 1984). Thus one can understand the resistance to change in general, including the changing of female roles in society with the advent of women's educational programs. As the editors of *Against All Odds* stated,

> ... it is necessary for us to acknowledge that even within the framework of development, one is often working with women - and men - who are personally grappling with their own response to relition; who are in a genuine predicament when working from within religious or cultural traditions to effect social change, and for whom the odopting of "for or against" positions is a real dilemma, personally as well as in the course of their work (1994: viii).

For the purpose of this study, I have called this gender issue resistance. It can be manifested in many different ways as will be demonstrated by the case studies in Chapter Three. Resistance can manifest itself in denying women access to educational programs, opposing female participation, constructing barriers to the implementation of educational programs, impeding intergenerational education within the home environment, refusing to include women in the planning and implementation of educational efforts, and outward

violence. As the DGIS study on *Women, Islam, and Development* (1993) pointed out, religious reasons are frequently put forward to discourage Muslim women's education entirely: that a woman should stay at home, avoid mixing with men, and give priority to her task of wife and mother. As we will see later in the study, this same technique of utilizing religious explanations can also be used to promote Muslim women's education. It is a matter of interpretation of the religion and it's social teachings.

Frequently, men are viewed by Westerners as the obstacles to changing female roles. Husbands may resist the idea of having their wife leave the home to gain an education beyond his own level. They may discourage women from engaging in activities outside the home and in the public sphere. There may be a fear that continued education of women results in the challenge of basic teachings of the religion about appropriate roles for men and women, husbands, and wives. The traditional male role in a patriarchal society may seem threatened by newfound female independence and participation in decision making. "Western education in particular, tends to stress individual rights, responsibilities, and worth which may be seen as inconsistent with the view of a woman as subservient to her husband and obligated to meet his, and her children's needs before anything else" (Callaway and Creevey 1994) .

Whatever the reason, this resistance or opposition to women's educational programs on the part of women and/or men within local communities exists, and is addressed in this paper as a gender issue for women's educational programs in predominantly Muslim communities.

Access to Education

Attempts to widen access to education have been a major policy goal in many developing countries since the 1960's. Yet gender gaps in education still exist even when evidence points to the positive effects of educating girls and women. The reasons are numerous and vary for each specific country, culture, and context. Generally speaking, access to education may be viewed by looking at the physical availability of educational programs and opportunities for women, or by looking at the social, cultural, and familial conditions which permit or restrict females access to education if those programs exist.

In many areas of so-called developing countries, the educational opportunities available for girls and women are few. Many governments do not have the resources to make education generally available. This may be due to a lack of infrastructure or inadequate facilities for young girls to attend formal school. This lack of formal education for young girls leads to uneducated adult women who are frequently the beneficiaries of women's programs like the ones outlined in this study. Thus inadequate formal schooling for girls results in more illiterate adult women. The existence of nonformal educational programs and opportunities for adult women have grown over the past few decades. Many programs now exist both in rural and urban areas to address the educational needs of adult women. Yet the efforts to create opportunities for women's education and the sustainability of these efforts often hinge upon the second aspect of access.

Another issue regarding access for women to educational programs that must be considered are the social, cultural, and familial conditions which enable or deny women access to education. The existence of educational opportunities for women does not always guarantee access. This aspect of access may touch

on the issue of resistance to changing female roles, that was discussed as an independent gender issue earlier in this chapter.

The costs and benefits of educating women may be very different from those associated with educating men. While the benefits of educating females is public, the costs are private (Hill and King 1993). By costs, these may be measured by weighing the financial costs from spending family resources on education against the net benefits of keeping females out of educational programs. Costs may also be measured by the availability and accessibility of education and training programs for females. Opportunity costs also exist, such as the loss of labor in the home if women are enrolled in educational programs. For further information on costs and benefits for educating girls and women, Hill and King's study presents a table which nicely summarizes these points (1993:30).

Some cultural issues may create reluctance within families to have their female family members enroll in educational programs where they may be outside the home and in the public sphere. These cultural considerations add complexity to the issue of access, and cross over into the issue of resistance and social norms as well. As mentioned previously, there are extensive cultural considerations regarding each gender issue mentioned in this chapter.

Sex Segregation of Educational Programs and Sex of the Teacher / Facilitator

These two gender issues are combined in this discussion because the nature of the issues are closely linked. In many women's educational programs, the issue of studying with men or being instructed by men becomes paramount.

Some communities feel strongly about this issue, and female participation in educational programs frequently hinges upon either the segregation or integration of men and women in programs. While some communities support the segregation of the sexes, there are many who find mixed-sex educational programs and male teachers for female education undesirable.

As in the case of the author's experience in Niger for example, women's participation in educational programs with male instructors is sometimes denied. The promotion and hiring of female teachers and professionals has been one strategy to overcome this situation and maintain women's involvement in community educational programs. Having female professionals working in educational programs as instructors, facilitators, and field agents tends to reduce family concerns about their mother's and daughter's morality and safety. Yet a shortage of women in the education field is frequently a dilemma. UNICEF's *Strategies to Promote Girls' Education* (1992: 33) summarized the factors contributing to this shortage: the lower numbers of women who have the educational background to teach within the educational system; lack of advancement opportunities; the subordination of women within the profession; constraints on female mobility; dependence on the family; the dual burden of family and professional responsibilities; inadequate training programs; lack of housing; and the fact that city girls who are more educated and qualified would not go to villages even after teacher training.

Other communities feel that integration of men and women is of utmost importance for educational programs. Proponents of integration of the sexes in educational settings fear that the danger in educating women in isolation of men will result in education and training that is less valued for females than for males (DGIS 1993). Conditions within a rural community such as urban migration, or political change at a given time may create an environment where integration

(usually unacceptable) is permitted. Lack of teachers for example, may force integrated classrooms. In situations where single-sex female literacy courses are happening with World Vision in Senegal, men have seen the results and requested similar programs of their own. If this was not feasible, then the men joined the women's classes (personal communication, B. Mboup, April 26, 1995).

Again, each situation is different, and contingent upon the social norms and views towards the education and role of women in the society. But the issue of whether to hire female or male program staff, and whether to have single-sex or segregated programs can have a monumental positive or negative influence on Muslim women's educational programs.

Organization / Logistics of Educational Program

The organization and logistics of educational activities for women can be a critical component to the overall success of the program. The successful implementation and planning of women's educational activities often hinges upon proper organization from the very beginning stages of program development. The organization and logistics are informed by the gender roles of participants and their families. Considerations must constantly be made with regard to social norms, acceptable locations, times, and duration of programs. Muslim women's access to and participation in educational programs is often dependent upon the way the program is planned and organized. What may seem like a simple detail such as safe, discrete transportation to a training site can be a monumental factor for women and their families in areas where mobility in the public sphere is limited. Significant differences such as these arise when one considers the ways that women's, men's, or segregated educational program

arrangements can be implemented. It is for these reasons that organization and logistics have been identified as gender issues within this study.

Two authors have recently written extensively about gender planning in the development process, Caroline Moser and Lise Østergaard. Both texts shed light on the importance of planning, organization, and logistics for development programs for women. Østergaard noted that gender awareness should be stressed during all phases of project cycles. "Plans of operation should give adequate priority to gender aspects with respect to budget, the recruitment of appropriate staff, and the necessity for the organization and training of local women" (1992: 8). Østergaard continued to outline several recommendations for planners in an attempt to increase development worker's capacity to deal effectively with gender issues.

The second author who supports the integration of gender planning into program cycles is Caroline Moser. Her book entitled *Gender Planning and Development* (1993) focused on the interrelationship between gender and development, the formulation of gender policy, and the implementation of gender planning practice. The agenda for the kind of gender planning Moser advocated, is to achieve both strategic and practical needs. Four critical characteristics are outlined in gender planning as a methodology: it's political and technical nature; it's assumption of conflict in the planning process; it's involvement as a transformative process; and the characteristics of planning as a 'debate' (1993: 87). She emphasized the role that training plays in creating gender awareness, and provides methodological procedures, tools, and techniques for integrating gender into the planning process.

Curriculum / Content of Educational Program

The content and curriculum of educational programs for women can be of critical concern to the successful implementation of programs. Education after all, is a tool for socialization, and is never neutral. "Within an educational system, people are socialized according to a culturally determined orientation. Such a system is nevertheless also influenced externally, specifically in the context of interaction with the environment, both by the national and, in our own age of the international society, by the international system" (Tibi 1991: 113). Curricula is often based on imported models without tailoring them to the needs of local women. The first concern on the part of program planners is ideally to develop or adopt an existing curricula which is relevant to local women's lives. Educational programs frequently focus on basic local language literacy, agriculture, animal husbandry, health and nutritional information, organizational skills, and income generating activities. At a glance, this content may not seem extremely controversial, and indeed, many programs are not.

Yet there are programs which are sponsored by organizations that have different objectives. Some women's literacy programs utilize an approach introduced by Brazilian educator Paolo Freire called *conscientizaçao* and is defined as being "... the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergence" (1971: 101). The process begins with the presentation of a codification such as a poster or film strip which the teacher an participants use as a springboard for discussion. Freirian themes often cover topics such as; women's rights, abuse of women, social change, rights for the landless and homeless. A key word from the discussion for example, "rights" may then be broken down in to phonemic families. The literacy lesson ensues with a syllabic approach is based upon that particular word. The themes and discussions are

meant to raise the consciousness of situations of oppression. This methodology often leads participants into action, addressing their situation and development problems themselves. In predominantly Muslim communities, the reception of a women's literacy program such as this may be quite controversial .

Smaller non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that do not have the resources for the research and development of relevant curriculum for women's educational programs often utilize the existing curricula of government educational programs. Thus, materials are often borrowed or purchased rather than developed. Utilizing this existing content may motivate or deter women from participating in the program.

Large development organizations, such as UNICEF, WHO, and UNESCO have the resources to develop curricula for women's educational programs that is in sync with their educational agenda. Their *Facts for Life* (1989) curriculum was implemented in the case study of Afghanistan (see Chapter Three). The ten messages included in the curriculum are: timing births; safe motherhood; breast feeding; child growth; immunization; diarrhea; coughs and colds; home hygiene; malaria; and AIDS. However, because of the controversial nature of AIDS education, and family planning in Afghanistan, the ten facts for life program was reduced to eight facts for life.

Thus the content and curriculum of women's educational programs are recognized for the purpose of this study as gender issues. The context of local communities and program sites will determine what is deemed appropriate content for women's education. Ideally, as recommended by the UNICEF - UNESCO Co-operative Programme (1988), women should take part in designing their own training and education. "It is essential that women participate themselves at the stages of analyzing their own needs and determining the objectives and content of what they are to learn" (1988: 25).

Effect of Women's Education on Family Life

There are numerous benefits to educating women. Many of these benefits have a direct impact on family life. Educated mothers are more likely to educate their children, especially their daughters, and they are more likely to consider health, nutrition, water, and sanitation issues (CAII 1994, Jabre 1988, UNICEF 1992). Studies also show that the education of women has an effect on the decrease of mortality among children (Rihani 1992). Thus, when planners target women in educational efforts, the positive effects on the family are frequently far-reaching.

Yet planners must also consider the potential negative effects that educating women may have on family life. Many opponents of women's education claim that time in educational programs results in time away from household duties and family obligations. If the mother spends time away from the household, her work load is often absorbed by other female household members. Frequently, given their heavy responsibilities, women have neither the time nor the energy left for educational activities. The effects on family life when women participate in educational programs can be both beneficial and burdensome.

The planning of women's educational programs frequently address "women" as one monolithic category. Østergaard discussed how this myopic focus on "women" does not take into account the countless differences among women. Age, class, caste, educational level, position in the household, and marital status all influence a woman's ability to participate in educational programs, and the impact those programs will have on them. Women's social situation is more strongly determined by family structure than men's.

Østergaard pointed out that women are never simply women; they are daughters, widows, married mothers of small children, unwed mothers, wives of migrant laborers, mothers-in-law. "We cannot simply ask how a project has affected women's roles in the family; we must also ask how family roles affect their potential participation in the project" (1992: 9).

Sustainability

Since it's inception in the 1980's, the term "sustainable development" has come to mean many things to many people. Holmberg and Sandbrook (1992) while writing within the context of environmental protection, argued that there are some seventy definitions of sustainable development in circulation . They continued that whatever it's origin, as a concept, it has become devalued to the point where to some, it is now just a cliché. They point out that sadly, that "sustainable development" has often been iterchanged with "sustainable growth" and their article outlines very clearly the differences between the two. "Sustainable development means either that per capita utility or well-being is increasing over time with free exchange or subsititution between natural and man-made capital, or that per capita utility or well-being is increasing over time subject to non-declining natural wealth" (1992: 22). Holmberg and Sandbrook pointed out that there is often a vagueness between what sustainable development fundamentally involves, and what is desirable in the pursuit of it. For example, participation in decision-making is held to be important in achieving sustainable development, yet democracy may not be the mechanism for achieving sustainable development. These authors championed the idea that it is essential to focus on the grass roots or community level when making sustainable development operational. They advocate that sustainable

development will not be possible in the absense of the involvement and empowerment of the intended beneficiaries of the process.

While "sustainable development" is frequently used in reference to environmental protection, it is also used with regard to the internal characteristics of specific program activities and their endurance. Many development workers would define sustainability in terms of the maintenance and longevity of a program, or it's capacity to continue after funding or outside support ceases. Programs often incorporate training of trainers components in order to grow internal frameworks and support structures for their program. The education of women in and of itself is often defined as a sustainable development activity because educated women are more likely to understand and participate in other development initiatives such as environmental awareness, hygiene, sanitation, and agricultural improvements. "Educated women are more able to understand, support, and participate in democratic, social, economic, and social systems" (Creative Associates International, Inc. 1994).

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined nine gender issues as surveyed in the literature. Although highlighting these issues leaves so much information by the wayside, it will shed light upon the case studies in Chapter Three. Each interview source will address these same nine issues in their case studies. This will provide a framework from which to analyze the data.

CHAPTER THREE - CASE STUDIES AND ANALYSIS

Case Studies of Muslim Women's Educational Programs

The following case studies on UNICEF Afghanistan, FIVDB Bangladesh, World Vision Senegal, and USAID Yemen were derived from rich interviews with the personnel of these programs. They offer an example of the diverse cultures and traditions of Muslim communities worldwide, and the complexities of religion and it's impact on program activities. Each source was asked to explain a specific case, and discuss their relationship with the gender issues list (see Appendix C). They were then asked to determine the gender issues that were most prominent within their programs. The description of these issues and their explanation of how the program dealt with these issues and their resolution follows. After the interviews were transcribed, information was then formulated into the case studies that follow.

The limitations of presenting the cases in this manner is that each analysis is a personal interpretation. Individual responses to the task of prioritizing these issues is based upon their perspective alone. There are certainly varied interpretations from others within the same programs as to which issues may have been more prominent than others. In addition, some of the sources relied heavily upon their memory and ability to recall specific information. Details are sometimes vague because sources were more than a few years removed from program operations. At any rate, the interviews provided a wealth of information which has been shaped into case studies and an analysis of gender

issues and their resolution. They offer the reader valuable insight into the various challenges confronted in women's educational programs in Muslim communities and their resolution.

CASE STUDY # 1

Interview Source: Homa Sabri, National Officer
UNICEF, Afghanistan

Educational Program Title: Skills Training and Literacy Program

Location: Mazar-i-sherf, Afghanistan

Management:

Collaboration between UNICEF and local non-governmental organization: Afghan Women's Association. UNICEF provided financial assistance

Target Population & Profile:

Rural Muslim women, in Mazar-i-sherf (northern region of Afghanistan) who were predominantly widowed. The average female participant was about 14 years in age, with no formal education.

Program Dates:

Initiated in 1991 and proceeding into 1993. UNICEF suspended this program and focused on displaced emergency assistance when the fighting in Kabul became too fierce to continue the program.

Objective/Goals:

To provide women with basic education and assistance in addressing the economic hardships caused from the war and loss of significant percentages of male population.

Prominent Gender Issues Identified by Interview Source:

1. Curriculum/Content of Educational Program
2. Effect on Family Life
3. Sustainability
4. Resistance to Changing Female Roles
5. Sex of Teacher/Facilitator

Background Information:

Afghanistan has been plagued with war since 1978 when pro-Soviet leftists took power in a bloody coup and concluded a military treaty with the USSR. In December 1979, the USSR began a massive military airlift into Kabul and Soviet troops spread out over Afghanistan to fight the rebels. Fighting continued for nine years until a United Nations-mediated agreement was signed in April of 1988 and the Soviets withdrew by February 1989. Afghan rebels rejected the pact, and continued to fight Soviet-supported factions in Afghanistan. In 1992, the Communist President Najibullah resigned and guerrilla forces advanced on Kabul ending 14 years of Soviet-backed regimes on April 28, 1992. Over two million Afghans have been killed, and six million have fled the country since 1979. Clashes continue between moderates and fundamentalist forces, and the fighting has not yet ceased.

Years of strife have left more than 400,00 widows, creating tremendous shifts in traditional gender roles. Women are now confronted with financial responsibility which was traditionally a male domain. Culturally, men are responsible to care for the family, and it was considered shameful and embarrassing if a woman must work to support the family. During peacetime, it was unacceptable for women to be responsible for a family's financial support. Yet as the war raged on, men left communities to join the fighting and never returned. Women were forced to cross traditional gender boundaries and earn an income to support the family.

UNICEF had been working with women's literacy programs in Kabul and three other provinces. They were collaborating with the government in areas under their control, and with NGO's in areas beyond the control of the government. Since 1982, The Afghan Women's Association was working with disabled and widowed village women in the area of income generation to address their economic situation. They proposed that UNICEF collaborate with them to develop a program which integrated women's literacy and income generation. The Afghan Women's Association's objectives for income generation were integrated with UNICEF's priority for education, resulting in the Skills Training and Literacy Program in Mazar-i-sherf.

Program Description:

Gradually, The Afghan Women's Association gained the community support for the program. UNICEF's "Facts for Life" video was shown to community leaders in order to share the message they wanted to introduce. The curriculum for the first year of the program focused on these basic health education topics; safe motherhood, breast feeding, child growth, immunization, diarrhea, coughs and colds, home hygiene, and malaria. After developing a basic trust with the community, The Afghan Women's Association and UNICEF introduced basic literacy skills during the second year of program implementation,.

The Afghan Women's Association did not want to utilize the government curriculum which was more neutral, because they were in opposition to the government. Texts were bought for the basic literacy component from Nabroska, an NGO supporting the *Mujahideen* [4] freedom fighters. Thus the content of the Nabroska texts focused on religious war and freedom fighting. Concerned about

[4] From *Mujaddid* - a renewer or reformer of Islam.

the political and moral issues involved in this curriculum, UNICEF introduced a "Facts for Life" literacy kits that had been developed by UNICEF Iran. So, the second year focused on basic literacy using both the UNICEF "Facts for Life" curriculum, and the Nabroska curriculum.

The class facilitators were all female Social Workers who were provided with transportation and an escort to go to the community classes three times per week. Classes of 12-15 women met from 1:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon at a location designated by the local community. Two hours of this time was spent on income generating skills such as tailoring, embroidery, and sewing. One hour was spent on literacy.

Prominent Gender Issues:

Identification and analysis by interview source of prominent gender issues that surfaced during program implementation:

1 - Curriculum:

The first year of the Skills Training and Literacy Program focused on building community trust, addressed basic health education issues, and introduced skills for income generating activities with women. Initially, the community leaders, all men, were concerned that UNICEF's "Facts for Life" video and it's content would introduce western ideologies to the village. They were suspicious that the program would promote unveiling and activities against Islam. Of the ten messages on the "Facts for Life" video which was shown to the community leaders, eight health education topics were approved; safe motherhood, breast feeding, child growth, immunization, diarrhea, coughs and colds, home hygiene, and malaria. Two messages, timing births (family spacing), and AIDS, proved to be very controversial, and the community leaders

requested that they be dropped from the "Facts for Life" basic health education curriculum.

The literacy component of the program was introduced the second year, and sensitive political issues regarding content and curriculum emerged. The collaborating NGO, The Afghan Women's Association preferred to utilize the Nabroska materials which focused on holy war and religious ideology for the education of Mujahideen freedom fighters. The government curriculum was based upon a more neutral message, yet The Afghan Women's Association would not agree to implement it because of political issues. UNICEF advocated to combine the government text with the Nabroska text, but this attempt was to no avail. The NGO would not partake in anything which showed support for the government. UNICEF eventually introduced a literacy kit that was developed by UNICEF Iran. based upon the "Facts for Life" materials.

> "The Nabroska materials always talk about Islam, and holy war. We had to work it out with the community, and wanted to say that this is actually not supposed to be taught to people. We have to talk about peace, we have to talk about, you know, communication! This was a problem we couldn't solve. Finally, we said, we just leave it to them... and they decided to use the Nabroska textbooks."
> (Homa Sabri)

The situation surrounding the content and curriculum was very sensitive. The Afghan Women's Association did not want to take sides and sacrifice UNICEF funding, so they aligned themselves with the community in order to introduce their curriculum. The Afghan Women's Association served as a buffer between UNICEF and the local communities, and most of the negotiation was between the NGO and UNICEF rather than with the community.

2 - Effect on Family Life:

Women's education can have both positive and negative repercussions on family life. The participants only had the opportunity to read during class time. When the women returned home, they were very occupied with household responsibilities. In some cases, other family members such as the mother-in-law would not be supportive and help with household chores. Many families felt that it was not acceptable for a woman to neglect her household responsibilities and spend time at home reading and writing. The issue of women's education and the effects on the family life was of great concern for UNICEF in the rural areas.

> "The fear was in the community that if these widows become more educated, then they will leave with children to go find job. And it would be embarrassment for family" (Homa Sabri)

UNICEF did not want to appear to be supporting this. The empowerment of women can sometimes create conflict within the home. Women may not have the courage to return to the home and implement the basic health practices because she is not supported by the husband or mother-in-law within the home. Women often get caught in the politics of relationships. She may gain new ideas and knowledge, yet is confronted with the issues surrounding what to do with that knowledge. UNICEF was concerned with the purpose of educating women if she is unable to apply that new knowledge.

3 - Sustainability:

In the urban areas where UNICEF worked with women's literacy, jobs existed for women, and families were more open-minded about women and work outside the home. There were also more opportunities for women to

continue their education in the urban areas. In the village, there were no further opportunities for women to work outside the home. UNICEF did not promote urban migration, but some women did move to the cities to seek employment or educational opportunities which did not exist at the village level.

The issues of sustainability were great for UNICEF, because they do not promote programs which are unable to persist once UNICEF funding ends. Unfortunately, this program was forced into an abrupt close due to the war in the country. Thus, the prospects of sustainability were remote for this program.

4 - Resistance:

Education has been a sensitive issue in Afghanistan even before the war. People are reserved about educating women, because they feel that it will change their mentality and behavior.

> "People had some reservation about education for women. They were thinking that if a woman gets educated, then their mentality would change... about Islam, their behavior would change. And working was considered embarrassment, or out of place for women." (Homa Sabri)

The role of women is not to work in the public sphere, but rather in the home. Yet over the last years, and with all the changes war has brought about in Afghanistan, religious leaders community leaders, and men in general are less resistant than in the past.

> The situation is changed. I know that religious people, these religious leaders... they are against... but I think they are caught like cats in between two things. Because if they don't provide women education or jobs, I mean...what happens? Now that Afghanistan has more than 400,000 widows, who is going to take care of them? I know the resistance is there. But then if they resist, I would as a person I would just go and say, okay,

> you're the government, you're the religious leader and the community leader, and what would you do with these widows that you don't want them to work? Give me an option and I'm not going to... I'm interested! When there is no husband, there is no farm, there is no income... and as a government, as a community leader, they don't have the sources to help! (Homa Sabri)

Thus, the circumstances were such that there were not a lot of options available to deal with the economic hardships for widows brought on by many years of battle. If there is no husband, no farm, and no income , traditional roles and social norms are bound to change. Yet some levels of resistance existed at many different levels within the program. Resistance to women's education, to the curriculum, to the opportunity to work outside the home, and internally from the families of participating women.

5 - Sex of the Teacher/Facilitator:

In a women's education program in Mazar-i-sherf, it was essential that all the facilitators were female. There were many circumstances and situations that are best dealt with women by women.

> " It is so important to have a woman. And a woman who can be sensitive enough to know the culture. If I am a man in UNICEF, I cannot go to community and talk about women's education. Because if I am telling a community, 'Your women should be educated,' they take it as insult. I cannot talk about man problems with men, because I am a woman. A woman should deal with women." (Homa Sabri)

Resolution

Ways in which the program dealt with the prominent gender issues mentioned above.

Content/Curriculum

The first year of the program dealt mostly with basic health education. When the community leaders were convinced that the program was addressing everyday problems, and the content was acceptable, the introduction of the literacy component at year two was implemented without problem.

When UNICEF was confronted with the conflicting ideology of Nabroska's curriculum, and The Afghan Women's Association and the community wanted to maintain it, UNICEF did not engage in the politics of the issue. They chose to introduce their "Facts for Life" curriculum, and if it would have been unsuccessful, they would have preferred to pull-out rather than support the politics of the Nabroska curriculum.

Effect on Family Life

UNICEF began to include men in the displaced persons programs in Jalalabad. The husbands were invited to join them in meetings and classes in order to create an environment where men and women can share knowledge.

Sex of the Teacher/Facilitator

UNICEF recruited only female Social Workers to facilitate classes in Mazar-i-sherf. This helped avoid issues of resistance to men teaching women's classes.

Resistance to Changing Female Roles:

The community leaders were invited to view the UNICEF "Facts for Life" video to dispel concerns about the curriculum of the program. They were asked how they felt about the content, and with their feedback, they pruned the ten

messages to eight basic health messages. They were hesitant about the AIDS and the family spacing components. Thus the community leaders were informed from the onset, and the program design was changed after taking their concerns into consideration. Steps were taken to introduce The Afghan Women's Association and UNICEF as a humanitarian program, helping to address the community needs.

CASE STUDY # 2

Interview Source: Mainus Sultan, Program Organizer & Literacy Trainer
Friends in Village Development - Bangladesh (FIVDB)

Educational Program Title: Women's Adult Literacy Program
(Component of an Integrated Rural Development Program)

Location: Guian Ghat, Bangladesh

Management:

Local non-governmental organization: Friends in Village Development, Bangladesh (FIVDB).

Target Population & Profile:

Rural Muslim women in Guian Ghat who were mostly married and ranging in age from approximately 16 to 50.

Program Dates:

FIVDB began the literacy component of it's Integrated Rural Development Program in 1990. Information for this case study derived from the experiences and follow-up investigation of the 1990 burning of the women's literacy center in the Guian Ghat region. FIVDB's programs continue in Bangladesh today.

Objective/Goals:

FIVDB's literacy approach for women emphasized self-reliance and participatory decision-making processes in order to establish a new social structure where women could share their ideas.

Prominent Gender Issues Identified by Interview Source:

1. Resistance to Changing Female Roles
2. Curriculum/Content of Educational Program
3. Social Norms

Background Information:

Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in 1971 after nine months of war with Pakistan. The Bengali ethnic group make up 98% of the population, and share the common language, Bengali, which is also the official language. Considered one of the world's most impoverished nations, Bangladesh is frequently plagued by monsoon rains and natural disasters.

Since 1976, FIVDB is one of many non-governmental organizations which has been combating the problems of rural poverty and lack of education in the country through the implementation of an integrated rural development program in the Sylhet region. Activities encompassed health and nutrition, agriculture, animal husbandry, credit and savings, and organizational building and development for the rural poor. A baseline educational survey was conducted by FIVDB in 1990, and it was determined that only nine percent of the villagers were literate, and they were all male. So, FIVDB organized the first-ever literacy program in Guian Ghat. Women's participation in literacy programs in this region was not customary.

Program Description:

The FIVDB literacy program in Guian Ghat, formed two sex-segregated literacy classes. The program included a six-month basic literacy course, then a three-month post literacy follow-up component. The basic literacy course consisted of three primers divided into sixty lessons. The content and themes for the discussion in each session covered topics such as women's rights, abuse of women, work and labor issues, rights for the landless and homeless, health and nutrition, and the root causes of poverty, to name a few. The village constructed a thatched-roof house that served as literacy training site for the women.

The *Mullahs* [4] expressed their opposition to literacy for women by claiming that women's participation in a literacy class is against the code of Islam. They verbally discouraged the women from attending, and asked the female literacy organizer not to come to the village. The *Mullahs* did not oppose the male literacy class. Through a long process of negotiation, FIVDB conducted a conference with all the men, and explained the objectives of the program. Later, a 'learner's conference' was conducted to solicit feedback on the situation from the women themselves. FIVDB continued it's classes despite the local resistance, and twenty learners were enthusiastic in attendance. The conflict culminated when the *Mullahs* set fire to and destroyed the literacy site. The participants attempted to reorganize the center, but only after months of suspended activity.

Prominent Gender Issues:

Identification and analysis by interview source of prominent gender issues that surfaced during the program implementation:

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[4] Persian form of *mawla,* "master" of religious sciences and member of the *Ulama'* or learned class of religious and legal scholars.

1 - Resistance to Changing Female Roles

FIVDB's literacy program challenged the traditional roles of women, and resistance to these changing female roles was a central issue in the literacy program in Guian Ghat. This resistance to the program was most evident from the local religious leaders, the *Mullahs*. Through background research, the FIVDB was able to conclude that *Mullahs* do not categorically oppose women's literacy programs all over Bangladesh. Yet the literacy program in Guian Ghat resulted in personal losses to the Islamic clergy.

A follow-up investigation was conducted by FIVDB after the burning of the literacy center, and interviews were conducted with the female learners to ascertain what they though the causes of the *Mullahs* resistance might be. Insights were published in and article by Sultan in Convergence (Vol. XXVII, No. 213: 79). Some of the findings conclude that the women's literacy class was viewed by the *Mullahs* as parallel to, and in competition with the traditional Qur'anic schools of their domain. The traditional role of *Mullah* as social leader was challenged by the skills taught in the literacy classes. In addition, the traditional role of a *Mullah* as a spiritual healer was threatened by health information in the literacy classes, and their personal behavior and practice of polygamy was exposed through the discussion in the classes.

2 - Curriculum/Content of Educational Program

The content of the material covered non-neutral themes such as divorce, women's emancipation, human rights, family laws, and agriculture. FIVDB recognized that their curriculum was not neutral.

"We never claim it's a neutral curriculum. I mean, this is what we thought to write. In that particular social context we felt we were doing the right thing. There were many people who thought we were doing crazy thing. But we thought it's the right thing, so we did it. And that curriculum is basically geared towards helping women to be self-reliant which has a big contradiction with traditional culture." (Mainus Sultan)

This tension with traditional culture, emphasizing women's involvement in the decision-making process, threatened the *Mullahs* position wielding maximum leadership power.

3 - Social Norms

The social norms of the village did not dictate that girls or women go to school. Thus there was a lot of question as to why it was now the woman's role to go to school. Women have been illiterate for generations, so why should families suddenly support their participation in educational programs?

"People perceive that it's a boys job to go to school. I mean, why woman's job to go to school? Nobody ever seen a woman going to school, there was no woman's school, and probably nobody ever talked about women going to school... I don't know. So those issues were never discussed in a social situation, that's my understanding. So whenever you are doing something and it looks new, people raise questions." (Mainus Sultan)

Resolution:

Ways in which the program dealt with the prominent gender issues mentioned above.

Resistance to Changing Female Roles

FIVDB initially held consciousness raising meetings with the *Mullahs* and the prominent men of the community to explain the objectives of the program and gain their support. When the *Mullahs* continued to show opposition to the program, FIVDB held meetings with the female participants in order to gain their insight into the situation. Thus, negotiation, and communication were important in the beginning stages of the program.

Through follow-up research, the FIVDB was able to conclude that *Mullahs* do not categorically oppose women's literacy programs all over Bangladesh. Program workers spoke to Islamic scholars who offered an important perspective on the issue of educating women. The Prophet Mohammed declared that the acquisition of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, male and female. Thus, since there is no evidence that Islam is a religion against women's education, there was speculation that the *Mullahs* in this particular region may have been reacting to the situation based on individual interest.

After the burning of the literacy center, FIVDB continued to visit the village for months afterwards, creating high visibility and offering support to the women of the program.

> "We felt like it's our moral obligation to go to the village and project our physical presence... that we are not going to retreat or something like this. Because these women are going to be vulnerable and things like this... they might be victims." (Mainus Sultan)

Recognizing this, FIVDB maintained high visibility, visiting the community and helping to convey the notion that the women were not in it alone helped the confidence of the women involved.

Site selection is an important consideration for FIVDB. The organization has a tendency to work in areas that are less conservative so there will be fewer challenges in implementation. By carefully surveying program areas, they are able to ascertain the level of risk involved, and try to work in areas where programs can be implemented peacefully.

CASE STUDY # 3

Interview Source: Babacar Mboup, Project Manager

Educational Program Title: Education & Literacy Project
(within the wider context of an integrated rural development program)

Location:

This case will look at World Vision's development activities in Louga, the northern region of Senegal, where Babacar Mboup managed more than 35 literacy learning centers. One village within the region of Louga will be examined which he has given the fictitious name: Ngembe.

Management: World Vision International

Target Population & Profile:

Co-ed participation was encouraged within each literacy center, yet approximately 85% of the 2500 people enrolled in 35 literacy centers in Louga were Muslim women.

Program Dates:

This case will look at activities between 1991 and 1995. World Vision still continues programs in Senegal.

Objective/Goals:

The literacy program was created to assist women and rural villagers in local language reading and writing to help them manage existing development activities (income generation, water, health, and agriculture). World Vision as an organization seeks to spread the Christian message. As World Vision President Robert A. Seiple said, "Evangelism is the essence of our heartbeat, our passion, our sense of urgency for everything that we do" (World Vision brochure entitled, *Making a World of Difference* date unknown).

Prominent Gender Issues Identified by Interview Source:

1. Resistance to Changing Female Roles
2. Organization / Logistics
3. Curriculum/Content of Educational Program

Background Information:

World Vision is an international Christian relief and development agency dedicated to meeting basic human needs throughout the world. As their mission statement declares, "World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seed justice, and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God" *(World Vision Core Values & Mission Statement* - pamphlet, date unknown). Their work in more than 90 countries includes projects in community development, emergency relief, child care and family assistance, community leadership training, and evangelism.

This case will examine World Vision's literacy component of their integrated development activities in the northern, predominantly Muslim region of Louga, Senegal. A dry region, with severe water problems, World Vision began a project with numerous villages that focused on digging bore holes, community schools, health huts, and adult literacy activities. World Vision

encouraged participation in development programs, and called for community contribution both physically, financially and materially. This they say, encouraged commitment and helped foster a community's ownership in a development activity.

Program Description:

The literacy program in the region of Louga was first initiated during the dry season. During this time of year, many men from the community leave for nearby towns in search of work. Older men, women, and children are usually left behind in the village. A baseline village survey and needs assessment was first conducted in each village. Then World Vision followed up by visiting each community's chief and elders. Village-wide meetings ensued to discuss literacy, it's function, and the objectives of the program. Because most of the men were working outside the community during dry season, many of these meetings took place with mostly women, who, in this area, tended to be more outspoken and courageous when a gender imbalance is in their favor.

A literacy professional was then brought to the community for two dry seasons, and the villagers provided them with food, boarding, and transportation. At the beginning of the program, World Vision intended to utilize books, primers, and materials that were heavily transmitting Christian messages. Due to internal resistance, they instead used materials purchased from the Senegalese government. Eventually, they developed their own functional literacy materials which were in direct relation to the other World Vision activities happening simultaneously in the community. Literacy vocabulary and lesson content for example reflected other community projects in which the villagers were involved.

After completion of the local language literacy program (in *Wolof*), two new-literates were selected from each class to participate in an additional pedagogical training for facilitators. These trainers were then sent out to satellite villages around the literacy center to establish secondary learning centers. These teachers do not function as paid facilitators, but rather work on a voluntary basis.

In the fictitious village of Ngembe, the men who had been working in nearby towns returned to the communities to discover that the women had been participating in this program for three months! As Mr. Mboup explained, "Their women were already involved, and making money, doing calculations, and speaking about their project, planning for tomorrow, everything like that. And you know, talking about their rights!" The village literacy class threatened closure because the men felt that this course was teaching women how to oppose the men! World Vision intervened by speaking first with the village chief, then holding a community meeting to discuss the decision to close the literacy project. Mr. Mboup suggested a strategy for dealing with this issue (see Resolution section below), the class remained open, and the men became active participants of the project.

Prominent Gender Issues:

Identification and analysis by interview source of prominent gender issues that surfaced during program implementation:

1. Resistance to Changing Female Roles

When the men returned from working in the nearby town and discovered that their wives and mothers were three months into a literacy program, they felt there had been a change in their behavior. They complained that the class was

instructing the women how to oppose men, and they called for a closure of the literacy center. Mr. Mboup held a consultation with the village chief.

> "The chief said, 'I heard say that, you know, that the women are becoming a little bit challenging and stuff like that. But mine are not! And the wives of my son's are not! But in the village there is some complaint about a change. And if they decide to keep their women at home, I can't oblige them to go'." (Babacar Mboup)

They felt that the women were giving too much importance to finances, and saving money, that it was threatening their morality. They felt that women had become rebellious, talking back to men, and making decisions on their own. In addition, they explained that the women were spending too much time outside the home, and were becoming a little negligent of their children.

2. Organization / Logistics

This issue was selected by Mr. Mboup as an issue because of the prominent role organization plays in implementing a literacy program. Community involvement was critical for World Vision's programs, and steps were taken to include men and women from the early survey stages of the program, through implementation, and conflict resolution.

3 - Curriculum / Content of Educational Program:

World Vision employs mostly Christians. Babacar Mboup was one of two Muslims at the administrative level of World Vision, Senegal. His involvement in World Vision's literacy initiative played a significant role in the selection of content for the program. World Vision's curriculum was initially laced with a Christian message that Mr. Mboup felt was unnecessary and inappropriate if the goal is simply to read and to write.

Resolution

Ways in which the program dealt with the prominent gender issues mentioned above.

Resistance to Changing Female Roles

The Program Manager initially went to the village chief to discuss the issue of closing the literacy centers. When it became clear that the men felt threatened, Mr. Mboup asked if he could call a village-wide meeting to discuss the situation. The chief agreed. When the community met, the men initially voiced their complaints, and then the women were asked to explain their perspective. They denied the fact that they were becoming "challenging" to the men. Mr. Mboup proposed that a delegation of men sit in on the literacy classes for a period of time to prove or disprove their allegations. He encouraged the men to verify whether or not the instructor is teaching the women to rebel against them. Five men volunteered.

These five men attended the classes. One week, two weeks, three weeks passed, and they became really interested in learning how to read and write themselves! Ten additional men joined, and the class grew to more than 25 participants! The men eventually enlarged the classroom to accommodate the growing interest in literacy.

> "The classroom was so lively! Men were accepting assistance from women teaching them how to read, write, and do calculations! They would tease each other and the women would say, 'Oh, you think you are stronger than us... we are more intellectual than you!' and they would LAUGH!" (Babacar Mboup)

Another element of resistance could have easily developed with regard to having a Christian organization with an evangelical mission working in a Muslim community. However, the nature of the program alleviated any kind of resistance from religious leaders or community members because World Vision is Christian. World Vision worked to address the basic needs of the communities, and literacy was just one component to a complete package of development activities which were being implemented. World Vision was well-received by the community because of the diversity of it's activities. Literacy was seen as more appealing or attractive to the community because it was made practical and useful by linking the content with the other water, agriculture and health activities the villagers were engaged in.

Organization / Logistics

Continuous attempts were made to include and involve community members in the process. World Vision utilized the culturally appropriate channels of communication such as discussing issues first with the chief. Village-wide meetings were often held which maintained an environment to foster open communication. Women were included in program development, and were offered the opportunity to speak up in meetings dominated by men.

Curriculum/Content of Educational Program

Mr. Mboup refused to implement World Vision's curriculum that was heavily transmitting Christian messages. He argued that if World Vision's goals were simply to teach reading, writing, and project management, then these evangelical materials were unnecessary.

"They wanted me to take these books to the villages. I say no. This is no respect to do in a Muslim country. We deal with Muslims. And you said what we want is to teach them how to read and write and how to... how to manage their program. We can do that without these! So we have to rid these books of everything that relates to religion." (Babacar Mboup)

This bold resistance on behalf of the program manager may not have happened had he not have been Muslim himself. His initiative and insight on the appropriateness of content aided in avoiding potential resistance to the literacy program at the community level. Had the Christian curriculum been implemented, there may have been more resistance to literacy within the villages.

As mentioned above, World Vision yielded to Mr. Mboup's refusal to implement their curriculum materials. Instead, they used materials purchased from the Senegalese government that were more neutral. Eventually, the program developed their own materials which were directly related to other World Vision activities (water, health, agriculture, income generation) happening simultaneously in the community.

CASE STUDY # 4

Interview Source: Magda Ahmed, Project Director

Educational Program Title: Support for Women's Association - Yemen (SWAY)

Location: Ibb City and Ta'iz, Yemen

Management: United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Target Population & Profile:

Forty-two women (8 from Ibb, and 34 from Ta'iz) representing the executive committee from each of the 17 different Women's Union Centers in Ibb, Ta'iz, and their environs. Most of the women were married with children, and between the ages of 16-20. There were also approximately ten women in their thirties.

Program Dates: 1991 start-up continuing through June 1995.

Objective/Goals:

Institutional building, developing management capacities and providing targeted training for Women's Union leaders and members.

Prominent Gender Issues Identified by Interview Source:

1. Resistance to Changing Female Roles
2. Social Norms
3. Organization & Logistics

Background Information:

South Yemen gained it's independence from Britain in 1967 and became the Arab world's only Marxist state in 1970. More than 300,000 Yemenis fled from the south to the north after independence, and two decades of hostility and warfare ensued. An Arab League-sponsored agreement between North and South Yemen was signed in 1979. In 1988, another agreement was signed providing widespread political and economic cooperation. The two countries were formally united May 22, 1990.

After the gulf crises, USAID cut a great deal of money from the agricultural sector in Yemen, and continued with humanitarian services such as programs for women and children. This move was questioned by Yemeni, and many feel that it is political interference. Yet the country's policy is towards

opening itself up to international media, and international programs, thus implicitly supporting these activities with women in development. Indeed, since unification and the advent of the multi-party system in Yemen, women's programs have emerged like never before. Yet whether funding is from outside or inside the borders of Yemen, experience has shown that there is a limit to the extent, content, and impact these women's programs should have. Issues of women's empowerment and family planning for example, test these invisible boundaries of permissibility as will be demonstrated in this case study.

The two sites for this case study on Women's Unions in Yemen are in Ta'iz and Ibb. These unions developed in isolation of formal government and have a long history in the country. Ta'iz was previously the capital under socialist regime, and is located at the border of South Yemen. Women are generally more educated in Ta'iz, and keep a higher public profile than in other parts of Yemen. The first Women's Union was organized in Ta'iz in the early 1950's. Less than one hour away, Ibb is a much more conservative city where the first Women's Union was organized in 1986. The challenges of implementation were very different in Ta'iz and Ibb because of the history, cultural differences and social norms for each area.

The organization of the Yemeni Women's Unions is very extensive. Each governate (such as the capital, Sanaa) in Yemen has a branch, and within each branch, there are sub-branches which are referred to as centers. Each village would have a center. Thus, Project SWAY was created to support the Women's Unions already in existence. They worked at the branch level with the representatives from 17 centers. Each center provided services to anywhere from 50 to 250 women.

Program Description:

SWAY staff made attempts to be completely transparent when setting up and laying the groundwork for the program. They met with union leaders, and made visits to each village to talk with the local government about the program and it's objectives. The training materials were all translated into Arabic, and distributed so that the program objectives were clear to all involved. SWAY's only criteria for participation was a three-year commitment. Each village union selected representatives for the institutional building program.

The program began with a series of residency training workshops held first in Ta'iz, then replicated in Ibb. There were only eight women from Ibb, yet they were unable to travel and stay in Ta'iz due to cultural and social norms. Three residency workshops were included in the training program, each meeting daily from 8:00am to 5:00pm. Some outside technical trainers were hired by USAID who did some of the technical components of the three-phase workshops. The first workshop was for seven days and focused on assessment. During the month which followed, the women conducted assessments of the activities within their centers, and reviewed goals and objectives for income generating projects. The second workshop was held for 10 days and built upon these individual assessments. The women were trained to do a business analysis of the different activities in their centers. The women chose one activity to follow-up on, and they had to do some field work, research, and analysis of these activities. The final seven day workshop was held to assist the women in action planning. Each woman prepared a detailed 6-month plan, and 2-year outline for developing their activity objectives. All the Women's Union projects included literacy activities. In addition, the centers were engaged in handicrafts, sewing,

knitting, income generation activities, small animal husbandry, a bakery, and the creation of a kindergarten.

When the workshop series was completed, Project SWAY provided target training in response to the needs of the women's action plans for their centers. Women specified training needs in the areas of marketing, small enterprise, accounting, and management. Study trips to projects in the public and private sector were arranged for centers who wished to conduct operational research before embarking upon new activities. When centers requested specific technical training that SWAY often linked the center with organizations who could provide these services. One center in Ibb requested a family planning workshop, and Project SWAY was able to link them with a health service organization.

USAID provided each center with basic operational materials and equipment such as sewing machines, blackboards, cabinets, literacy supplies, and the like. Each center had the opportunity of writing a proposal for additional funding from USAID for the implementation of projects resulting from each center's action plan and targeted training.

The program had a very positive effect on building the self-esteem and self-confidence of the female participants. Project SWAY was geared towards institutional building, but one of it's most effective outcomes or by-products was individual confidence building.

Prominent Gender Issues:

Identification and analysis by interview source of prominent gender issues that surfaced during program implementation:

1 -Resistance to changing female roles:

Resistance was manifested on many different levels during the program. There was external and internal resistance. External resistance was usually on behalf of male community members, religious leaders, and families. While internal resistance came occasionally from women whose personal expectations of the program were not met.

The project in Ibb was faced with more external resistance than the project in Ta'iz. Yet in both areas, there was a lot of distrust about the hidden objectives of the American organization and what they want to do with the women of Yemen. There was suspicion about the content and about de-moralizing women or teaching things contrary to Islamic values. People questioned the nature of this program which did not demonstrate "visible" development like building wells or providing tractors, but worked on attitudinal and behavioral change. Some felt since the Women's Unions had been in existence for decades, they did not require additional assistance. During the target training phase of the program, SWAY linked a center requesting a family planning workshop with a health service organization who could provide this training. The program was attacked in the newspapers distributed by the Muslim Brotherhood[6]. At weekly Friday prayer meetings at the mosques, speeches were given in opposition to SWAY's activities with the women. They were attacked for introducing contraceptive programs with women, and questioned the values that Project SWAY was instilling which were in contradiction with Islamic values.

> "The resistance is coming from the fear of what you want to do with the women. And because of the economic situation, if that would compete

[6] Activist movement characterized as "fundamentalist" that originated in Egypt in 1928. Members are devoted to Islamic revitalization through an approach sometimes classified, millitant.

with the accessibility of men... on that was available there as long as it does not interfere with what they are doing, then it's fine. But the minute it comes to money, and business, and you know... that stuff, then the male would like to control more what's going on." (Magda Ahmed)

Resistance on an internal level was demonstrated by women who joined the program with expectations for technical training. Some women thought they would get hands-on technical training to give injections and learn sewing skills. When it was understood that the benefits of the program are more difficult to measure, and skills are not visible or material, some women decided to withdraw.

2 - Social Norms:

The program developed very differently in each area, because of the cultural differences and social norms for each region. Ta'iz was a little more liberal, and Ibb was more conservative. The effects of these regional characteristics can be seen above in the many ways that resistance both externally and internally were manifested. As mentioned above, many men did not agree that women should engage in economic activity. There is a general sense that financial matters are within the male domain, and women have no business getting involved in business!

3. Logistics

As was mentioned above, the three residency training workshops were held both in Ta'iz and in Ibb. Security was an big concern for families in both Ta'iz and Ibb when women stay away from home. The training in Ta'iz was held at the Women's Union rest house. This proved to be a save and secure environment for the women to stay. Hotel suites were also arranged for male

family members who had accompanied the ladies to the workshop to stay. Other women who had relatives in town, stayed with them. The women from Ibb and its environs were unable to travel and stay in Ta'iz even with a *muharim* [7], due to more traditional cultural norms. A *muharim* is often a male dominant family member who serves as an escort for women in the public sphere. When the training was held at a hotel in Ibb, the women did not stay in residence, but instead returned to their respective village communities before sunset each day.

Transportation was a major issue for both the training in Ibb and in Ta'iz. There were only eight women from Ibb, yet they were unable to come to Ta'iz due to cultural and social norms. So, the initiative and motivation of the women in Ibb was very high because they had to travel back and forth each day of the training. USAID eventually provided a car to the Ibb branch to help expedite this process.

Resolution

Ways in which the program dealt with the prominent gender issues mentioned above.

Resistance to Changing Female Roles:

Rather than providing specific services to women, the program built upon the capacity of the Women's Unions. The SWAY program helped to develop the management capacity for services and activities the Women's Unions were already providing. There was no new curriculum introduced, but rather it was a methodological process to strengthen existing institutions that women were

[7] Male who is in the ritual state of *ihram*, or state of ritual purity and sanctity achieved by renouncing certain activities and donnning a special garb worn on the hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca.

already involved in. Thus the nature of the program itself served to minimize the potential for resistance on a larger scale.

> " When we started, the women were furious about not having a lecture, or materials, where someone would stand and talk. And they said, 'We don't have anything to participate with!' 'What can we share with you?' And at the end of the seven days, I left everything hanging there on the wall... in flip chart. And they said, 'Ah yes!' I said all this is coming from you! We just ask you questions! That's all we did! You have all this information coming out! You look at it, you analyze the information, you go back, and you do it!" (Magda Ahmed)

SWAY engaged in dealing with resistance on the family and community levels as well. Program staff made frequent visits to the homes of program participants, and dissuade any hesitations for women to participate in residential trainings. At the village level, SWAY made every attempt to have open lines of communication and clear objectives for the villagers.

> "We were very transparent. In the sense that when we first went, we had to go to the villages. Village by village, and meet with the people there before the workshops. And handed in Arabic which was all translated, the material we were talking about in the workshops. In all our own meetings, their husbands was there, their brother was there, someone was there to listen to what we were talking about. We didn't have a meeting where there was no one around. They were not invited, they were just hanging there, and we didn't ask them to leave. It doesn't bother us at all to have them around. We thought this was an advantage."
> (Magda Ahmed)

When the resistance from the religious leaders, newspapers, and community mosques intensified, the SWAY program staff and the Women's Union met to decide how to confront this escalating harassment. It was agreed

that SWAY should not interfere, but let the Union handle it. So SWAY did not respond, and the Women's Union met with the governor, and became public about the objectives of the program, and their support of it.

In addition, the program was able address issues of internal resistance during the residential training workshops with the women. This enabled the Women's Union branch members in attendance to learn how to help address resistance in their own centers from community members who hesitate to allow women to get involved in activities and the like. Critical incidents and role plays helped create situations where the women could discuss and practice handling these issues of resistance among themselves.

Organization and Logistics:

It is important to note that the effective organization and effort to coordinate culturally appropriate accommodations, transportation, and logistics aided in the overall smooth-running of the program. These efforts played a large role in minimizing the potential resistance that may have arisen if the organization were not as effective.

The entire staff for Project SWAY was Yemeni with the exception of the Project Director, who was Sudanese. All were Muslim, and all spoke Arabic, the mother tongue. The whole program staff (except two drivers) were female, and were previous Women's Union members. These elements of SWAY program staff were fundamental for building trust with the women and their families.

> "The people felt they could trust us more. They can leave their daughters there (at the residential training). So that was one way to do it. Having a Yemeni staff was the basic... for them to trust us. If we were foreigners, I doubt too much they would leave their daughters to spend the night over where we are." (Magda Ahmed)

The staff was extremely committed, and worked above and beyond the call of duty or contractual requirements when accompanying participants during residential training. In addition, the fact that all the program administrators were women may have been an advantage in aspects of negotiation with communities and the government. The program director's impressions were that people felt more relaxed and less threatened when dealing with women, and paperwork was often expedited much more quickly than if they were men. SWAY staff made arrangements for male family members to accompany women to residential trainings, and provided transportation to women who were required to return to their communities at the close of each training day. SWAY even contacted the government to arrange police security at the Ibb training site, but the drivers proved to be adequate guardians. Program Officers and the Project Directors stayed with the women during residential training, so that all the women in the project were adhering to the same social norms and restrictions on mobility. This created a bond and built trust between the training participants and the SWAY staff.

SWAY also had the advantage of arranging for a Women's Union rest house in Ta'iz. This enabled any women coming from Ibb or the Ta'iz environs to have a secure, female residence when staying away from home.

Analysis

The case studies of women's educational programs in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen, demonstrate the variety of gender issues in women's educational programs in Muslim communities that may arise. The following analysis is an attempt to organize and examine the information drawn from the case studies and shared by the interview sources. There is a danger in

visually presenting the information in the following manner using tables, because the data appears more quantitative. Each table is a means of organizing the information, and can be presented only in conjunction with the previous case studies that add depth to this analysis.

While recognizing that the context and program were different within each of the countries examined, it is interesting to see the commonalties among the prominent gender issues identified within each program. There has been no attempt to generalize gender issues that exist for any women's educational program in a Muslim community. However, this analysis does provide the reader with some visual representation of the data, and some common characteristics emerge. The following table summarizes the prominent gender issues identified within each case by the interview sources:

Prominent Gender Issues	Homa Sabri *Afghanistan*	Mainus Sultan *Bangladesh*	Babacar Mboup *Senegal*	Magda Ahmed *Yemen*
First	Curriculum	Resistance	Resistance	Resistance
Second	Effect on Family	Curriculum	Organization	Social Norms
Third	Sustainability	Social Norms	Curriculum	Organization
Fourth	Resistance			
Fifth	Sex of Teacher			

Table 3. 1 - Summary of prominent gender issues in four case studies examined.[8]

[8] Note: Homa Sabri was the only source that responded by prioritizing the top five issues. The other sources identified three prominent gender issues each. Thus, in order to calculate the most prominent issues among all the cases combined, the top three gender issues identified by each source are used. The fourth and fifth issues from Homa Sabri were not calculated in Table 3. 2

In order to further analyze this information, Table 3. 2 demonstrates which of the issues were most prominent among all of the cases combined. By assigning a numerical value to each gender issue in it's order of prioritization, (First = 5, Second = 4, Third = 3), we are able to calculate which of the nine gender issues presented were the most prominent issues among all four studies. The totals below demonstrate that resistance, curriculum, social norms, and organization/logistics were the most prominent gender issues dealt with among the four case studies examined.

Gender Issues	First	Second	Third	**TOTAL**
Resistance	15			**15**
Curriculum	5	4	3	**12**
Organization		4	3	7
Social Norms		4	3	7
Effect on Family		4		**4**

Table 3. 2 - Most prominent gender issues in the four cases from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen explored in this study.

The purpose for categorizing the data into the preceding tables is to ascertain what gender issues were the most prominent in the programs examined. Yet each issue contains within it a myriad of differences from case to case. For example, when we look at resistance, it is clear that it was an important gender issue for most of the cases. Yet the ways in which the this resistance manifested itself varies greatly from case to case.

I have attempted to categorize the varieties of resistance noted within each of the case studies analyzed. By looking at ways in which resistance was

identified by each source, I have identified nine different manifestations of resistance. These are the identification of persons or groups resisting, methods of resistance such as verbal and physical, as well as reasons for this resistance. Each case study included elements of these varieties of resistance and have been identified with a check in the appropriate column.

Persons or groups resisting are identified as husbands/families, religious leaders, or internal parties within a project. They may be resisting because of opposition to the curriculum, the role of women and work, or changing female behaviors as a result of the educational program. This resistance may be actualized verbally, or physically.

Verbal resistance is any kind of oral opposition to program activities. Physical/violent resistance can be noted by the burning of the literacy centers as explained in the case study in Bangladesh. Any attempt to thwart the program in the media of newspapers is outlined as a form of resistance. Husbands resistance may manifest in many different ways, such as the denial of participation or opposition to educational program activities. Resistance from religious leaders may materialize in many different ways as outlined in three of the cases. Program staff may obstruct the implementation of certain curriculum as in the case in Senegal. Or participants may drop out because the program objectives did not meet their expectations. These are both categorized as internal resistance. Families and households may have a certain standard of the realm of women's work. Objections to women earning income outside the home for example, are in this section. Perceptions concerning appropriate behavior for women is the final category of resistance listed. The varieties of resistance can be visually presented in the following table:

Varieties of Resistance to changing female roles	Homa Sabri **Afghanistan**	Mainus Sultan **Bangladesh**	Babacar Mboup **Senegal**	Magda Ahmed **Yemen**
From Husbands/family	X		X	X
From religious leaders	X	X		X
From internal sources (women or persons within program)			X	X
Due to curriculum	X	X	X	X
Due to women's role & work	X		X	
Due to women & behavioral change (attitudes, decision making, etc.)		X	X	
Verbal resistance	X	X	X	X
Physical/Violent resistance		X		
Public resistance in the Media/Newspapers				X

Table 3. 3 - Varieties of Resistance to changing female roles in women's educational programs.

Thus we cannot generalize the kind of resistance or manner in which it develops, but we may conclude that it is potentially an issue to confront when working with women's educational programs in Muslim communities. An awareness that these various forms of resistance have existed in Muslim women's educational programs, may better prepare the development worker. Anticipating potential resistance can inform preventative planning to avoid these issues.

The sources identifies organization/logistics as one of the prominent issues in the studies analyzed. It is important to recognize that the reason for this is not because organization/logistics was a problematic issue in need of resolution. Rather, organization/logistics was identified because of it's significant role in the avoidance of potential problem issues. Careful planning and open communication for example, can perhaps dispel a husband's concern that an educational program for his wife would force her to spend too much time away from the household. Thus, planning is critical and identified as a significant gender issue because of it's potential to avoid or dispel resistance.

In addition to identifying prominent gender issues within their educational programs for Muslim women, the interview sources shared how these issues were confronted by development workers, and program staff, and participants. Again, this study does not attempt to suggest the best ways to resolve conflict pertaining to arising gender issues within women's educational programs in Muslim communities. However, a visual presentation of the diverse methods in which the sources were able to resolve gender issues demonstrates the vast possibilities and approaches to conflict resolution. It is important to note that among these methods there is no mention of religious knowledge. My assumption up until this study, was that religious knowledge could somehow be used as a tool for negotiating conflict. Muslim sources who have more religious knowledge than myself did not identify this as a method of resolving the conflicts arising. The case study in Bangladesh consulted religious authorities regarding the behavior of the *Mullahs* in Guian Ghat, but this was the only instance that the sources identified the understanding of religious knowledge as an explicit method of resolution. Granted, each source is Muslim, so perhaps the reason they did not identify Islamic knowledge as a method of resolution was because this knowledge was internalized. The non-Muslim "outsider" who

consciously learns about Islam may recognize this knowledge more readily as a method. The issue of religious knowledge will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Table 3. 4 represents various methods and strategies used by the programs, development workers, community members, and program participants in the case studies examined to resolve the gender issues referred to earlier. Categories were identified based on information provided by the interview sources. Appropriate planning was a method utilized by all of the cases examined as a way to avoid gender issues within the programs. I refer to this as preventative planning, and can include site selection, communication, participation of the community in planning, and arranging appropriate logistics. These elements of program design that aid in avoiding conflict are the elements identified as one of the prominent gender issues among the four cases (See table 3. 2). In other words, organization and planning are used as a method to avoid conflict, therefore it was identified by the sources as a prominent gender issue for consideration. The method identified as "insider" staff is discussed at length in Chapter Four, but is outlined here as a way in which programs dealt with emerging gender issues. Different approaches to negotiation were utilized, and integrating males into the program was also a method utilized in the programs studied. The final category, entitled "concession" means that at some point in dealing with the issue, the program chose to concede. For example, the case in Afghanistan chose not to get too deeply involved with the Nabroska curriculum because it was such a sensitive political issue. They therefore conceded to using the texts because the community insisted on doing so. Detailed information on these methods of gender issue resolution can be found within the Resolution section of each case study.

Methods of Gender Issue Resolution	Homa Sabri **Afghanistan**	Mainus Sultan **Bangladesh**	Babacar Mboup **Senegal**	Magda Ahmed **Yemen**
Preventative Planning (Site selection, communication, community participation in planning, appropriate logistics, program design, etc.)	X	X	X	X
"Insider" staff (same nationality, gender, culture, language, religion, etc.)	X			X
Negotiation with "opposition" or sources of resistance	X	X	X	X
Negotiation with all parties involved in program			X	
Male involvement in program planning or educational program itself. Integrating gender.			X	X
Changes, alterations in curriculum/content	X		X	
Concession - Program "surrenders" or ceases to pursue resolution.	X Nabroska Curriculum			X NGO Negotiates

Table 3. 4 - Methods of Resolving gender issues

CHAPTER FOUR - IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY

The final chapter of this study will focus on it's implications. As outlined earlier, this analysis is limiting for the reader in that it is based upon my personal experiential learning cycle. This study has informed my personal work with women's educational programs in Niger, and will continue to shape my perspectives on gender in Muslim communities. Thus it is the reader's responsibility to glean from this analysis and these implications, useful information which could be adapted and modified for other contexts.

Revisiting my underlying assumptions when embarking upon this study will shed light upon the conclusions I have drawn regarding the findings. I will then discuss the "insider"/"outsider" perspective and clarify my beliefs of the role of the non-Muslim "outsider" (particularly female) in working with Muslim communities. A discussion of how the analysis of Chapter Three's case studies has informed my stance on the responsibility of the non-Muslim "outsider" to educate themselves about Islam as a religious system will follow. Finally, I will examine the implications of this study on my views of Islamic knowledge as a tool for non-Muslims to utilize when implementing women's educational programs in Muslim communities.

Personal Assumptions

The process of conducting this study has forced me to confront many assumptions I have had about the role of religion, gender, and development, in addition to my role as a non-Muslim working with Muslim women. My primary

assumption when working with Muslim women, was that there is a need for greater understanding of gender issues and their relationship with Islam and the religious belief system. In addition, I assumed that it was necessary for "outsiders" to gain deeper understanding of Islamic doctrine, tradition, and texts in order to work more effectively in Muslim communities. And finally, I assumed that this increased religious knowledge would aid the non-Muslim development worker to negotiate conflict arising out of gender issues within women's educational programs. As I embarked upon this study, I did not overtly acknowledge, nor did I fully realize that one of my objectives was to prove that increased knowledge of Islam could be used as a tool when advocating, negotiating, and resolving conflict or resistance with women's educational programs. Through the process of this study, I have come to the realization that religious knowledge as a tool can only be used by Muslims.

"Insider" / "Outsider" Perspectives

The sources in the case studies in Chapter Three were all Muslim, working in educational programs in their countries of origin (with the exception of Magda Ahmed who is Sudanese working in Yemen). They each spoke the language of the program participants, and shared a common culture. Yet they were all viewed as "outsiders" to some degree by the villagers with which they worked. This may be due to educational background, class, dialect, dress, or even body language. While each had an emic ("insiders") perspective on many issues within the program, they also possessed etic ("outsider") views that influenced in their roles as program directors and project managers.

Their analyses of gender issues has informed my own perception of these same issues because they are nearer to an emic perspective than myself. My

experience has been as a Western, educated, female working in a rural community in the northern region of Niger involved working with Muslim Hausa women and nonformal education. There were many issues regarding my role and the implications of a female, non-Muslim, "outsider" working with Muslim women in a rural community that I continually question. The last five years of my life have been an exploration of ways that non-Muslims working with Muslim women can better understand different cultural perspectives and their implications for women's education and community development. My personal process of learning about Islam has been one step towards attempting to understand an emic perspective of Muslim communities within which I work.

I do not believe that individuals are capable of removing, suspending their own cultural bias when attempting to understand another perspective. Every person is equipped with their own biased lens with which they view the world and others in it. In order to understand another perspective, I believe that one must learn to transcend personal cultural biases. An awareness of one's own beliefs, values, and cultural biases is imperative in this process. Once understood, I believe it is possible that observation, interaction, and understanding of another system becomes more easily visualized. This heightened awareness of personal culture and other cultures aids the ability to alter one's perspective. If a person chooses to "see" diversity, they can begin to explore diversity. By transcending what a person knows to be their own cultural biases, reality can be suspended to attempt to achieve role reversal and "see" or understand another perspective. Interpretation of similarities and differences in thoughts, feelings, and actions can then be more readily analyzed based on an enhanced understanding of another culture's logic system.

The most important lessen I have learned in attempting to "attain" an "insider's" perspective, is that it is impossible to accomplish, yet feasible, and

educational to explore. Distanced viewing, second-hand sources, and literature are not the ideal methods for attempting to understand another perspective. Ideally, one would use a combination of this with first-hand interaction with the source. I do believe that it is possible to explore and begin to understand another perspective if one transcends one's own. But interaction, time, and commitment are the key elements in seeking to obtain this view. As ethnographer Paul Stoller argues (1989: 10), in order to "... 'see' the deep significance of everyday interaction..." one must have continued contact in the field year after year. It is only through long-term study and interaction and by building relationships and trust, that cultures begin to truly reveal themselves to the "outsider".

Western, Educated, Non-Muslim ,"Outsider's" ; their Bias and Role

Callaway and Creevey's discourse on women and Islam in West Africa, discussed that, " The patriarchal nature of most Islamic societies reinforces the pervasive belief that Muslim women are more subject to the control of men than are women in most other societies" (1994: 3). It is important to distinguish and accept the cultural differences between the localities of these discourses in Africa and the Middle East, for example. The impact of Islam and its fusion with local culture in different regions varies enormously. The extensive debate on gender roles within Islam and the prevailing approach to emphasize the subordination of women to men is on the upraise. The educated, Western, non-Muslim, "outsider" must seek to delineate between the different nuances of Islam's impact on women's lives in different regions of the world, and avoid the dangers

of generalizations about the status, well-being, and happiness of women in Muslim societies.

Frequently, I think so-called "third world" women are perceived by Westerners and elites as passive targets and victims in a private, apolitical world. I believe that educated, Western, non-Muslim "outsiders" must proceed with caution so as not to make assumptions about the degree of women's oppression in any given society. Identifying with oppression everywhere can be patronizing. If a program's focus is working with Muslim women in educational development, there are a whole set of considerations which enter the picture. Religion as the main foundation of women's lives needs to be considered, integrated, and above all, understood by "outsiders" working within Muslim communities.

Western women project bias into the discourse on Muslim women in educational development. How much of our own oppression do Western women project into the condition of so-called "third-world" women's situations? It is interesting, and necessary to examine the cultural baggage which an educated Western female brings into the context of working with Muslim women in a rural community. We must attempt to transcend our own biases and transgress boarders of race, ethnicity, and culture in order to forge alliances.

Westerners must be extremely cautious with regard to the issues of feminism and religion. It is easy for an educated, liberated, non-Muslim woman with a Western background to become deeply disturbed by the position of women in a male-dominated society. How does one work within the confines of a social system that one may morally refute? I think some women refuse to work within it, while others work to change it. But the primary concern, regardless, should be trying to understand it! Knowing too little can result in dangerous conclusions and sweeping generalizations about culture, religion, and society.

Often times these generalizations are disrespectful trivializations of individual cultures within which one is trying to work!

In working with Muslim women in Niger, a person must recognize and reflect the importance of the views of Muslim males and their implications for education and women's programs. Sometimes this is difficult when biases of Western women towards Muslim men prevail. As discussed by Callaway and Creevey (1994), education provides possibilities for women to earn income, and have involvement in activities outside the domestic realm. It does not however, liberate women from the restraints imposed by the Hausa culture. "In order for education to be an effective catalyst for change in the lives of women, there must also be changes in male perceptions of appropriate public and private roles for women" (Callaway and Creevey 1994: 58). This is where the Gender and Development theory comes into practice. Women's educational development cannot take place in isolation of men.

> "Sometimes education can have a positive effect on the family life in terms of child rearing, and her... women situation herself, that she becomes empowered. But this empowerment of women in some situation creates conflict. When you empower a woman in a culture more than the capacity that she has, I don't know - maybe she will have some pleasure of having her own money, but then if she always has problem and a bad relationship, or an unpleasant relationship with the husband... it's another kind of conflict. I believe you need to build on gender relationships in general. The more men and women have common knowledge in things, they agree easier. To build up the respect between two persons... that I respect my husband's ideas, not that he is man, he is selfish, he has ego. And he, I will also expect him to respect my ideas not thinking that I am woman, I have less brain, I am weak, and I am not supposed to talk." (Homa Sabri - Interview, March 12, 1995)

An agenda for change though, should be explicit. If the development worker values educating women and men, who's agenda is this? Do some "outsiders" attempt to apply a feminist agenda of liberation onto women deeply imbedded in an entirely different cultural foundation than their own? Must not we look more deeply into the desires of the women involved?

I might dare to argue that it is not an outsider's place to take active part to encourage mobilization of women's movements in the rural Muslim communities. Through mere contact with a liberated, western female, ideas may begin to form regarding the role of women. But is it the role of the outsider to encourage women to question their own position in their society? Many development workers take the stance, "You are oppressed, and I have an obligation to tell you that you are oppressed and help you to do something about it!" It is these types of agendas, whether explicit or subliminal, which can undermine an entire cultural system's gender roles. This is not to say that I believe Muslim women in Niger for example, should maintain their present position in a male-dominated world. However, I do think it is the role of the women themselves to decide where their position is. We, as "outsiders" need to give up the conceptual authority on what is to be done. Agendas and solutions must come from the community and the women involved. We all must make an attempt to understand our own biases, then allow ourselves to transcend these biases, and recognize the realities of the women directly concerned.

Notably, "outsiders" do have certain strengths to offer women of so-called "developing countries" which should not go unrecognized. A greater access to information, mobility within the system, and resources may provide rural women with that which may otherwise be an impossibility for them to achieve themselves. In addition, sometimes a third party with no personal vested interest in cultural implications or the realm of work might have the ability to say

things, and voice opinions that third-world colleagues cannot say for fear of political reprisal (or otherwise).

Given the complicated, difficult process of working within this "insider"/"outsider" dichotomy, I think temptations to disengage in the debate exist. Self-doubt ensues, "Maybe I shouldn't be doing this...", "I do not share the same culture and religion, I do not belong...", or "Maybe it's not my place to work here..." The first and foremost characteristic for an "outsider" to posses in order have successful collaboration is commitment. My primary commitment for example, lies with acting as a human being respectful of other cultures, and my secondary commitment is to act as a female being, collaborating with women towards a greater understanding of each other's cultures. I believe this commitment can prove that it is possible to be an "Africanist" for example, without being African, or an "Islamist" without being Muslim. By "Africanist" and "Islamist" I mean that a person can be an advocate or a friend to the situations, causes, and issues surrounding Africans and Muslims without being African or Muslim themselves. My fond experiences in Muslim regions of West Africa, enable me to identify to a certain degree with Africans and Muslims. My continued investigation to understand the Islamic faith and gender issues in Muslim communities informs my perspectives, and I am interested and concerned about dialogues concerning Muslim women and education in West Africa. I am not, however Muslim, nor am I African.

In the search for the elusive "insiders" perspective, I have come to the conclusion that there is a greater need for understanding the nuances of our own culture and personal prejudice, as well as those of the culture within which one will work. Training programs for development workers and practitioners traveling overseas often incorporate components of cultural studies. Yet, there is just so much to know! It is my belief that sponsoring agencies are responsible for

providing in-depth training for all workers in the field prior to contact and exchange.

In conclusion, "outsiders" have a responsibility to understand their own culture and personal biases prior to contact with the "insider". In understanding one's own beliefs, values, and cultural biases, one can begin to transcend their own knowledge and understand other perspectives. One must heed caution to clearly understand other religions and cultures prior to making sweeping generalizations about the "insider's" religion and culture. Difference is not inferior. A little knowledge can be dangerous. Western, educated, non-Muslim women working with Muslim women need to especially be aware of their own biases regarding the role of women in a male-dominated society. Rather than defining what oppression means to Muslim women, we need to provide room, and create space for women's voices to be heard, in an attempt for self-definition.

Islamic Knowledge

Self-Education of the Change Agent

As mentioned above, my primary assumption prior to this study was that there is a need for non-Muslim change agents to increase their awareness and understanding of Islam. I initially thought that this project may develop into a " know - before - you - go " kind of handbook which would provide non-Muslims with an opportunity for self-education of the Islamic religion and gender issues prior to program involvement in Muslim communities.
I maintain that self-education is critical. I assume that the reader appreciates the importance of learning about the different cultures within which change agents

in development work. It is also essential to educate oneself about the religion of the peoples with whom one works.

It is important to read religious scripture, and I would indeed encourage non-Muslims who work with Muslim communities to become familiar with the Qur'an and the *Hadith* [9]. Tibi explained that acquaintance with these religious texts can inform the understanding of perception and practice of religious scripture which are considered Islamic by those concerned, yet they vary to a great extent in practice - in the prevailing historically and culturally diverse situations (1991: 12).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Islam has elements which may be seen as defending women's right to equality and education. In my preliminary investigation, I was intrigued and hopeful that there were so many elements of the religious texts which reflect favorably upon women, and even describe certain women and their positive influence upon Islam.

For example, Khadijah was the first wife of the Prophet Muhammed. She was a successful business woman who actually hired Muhammed and employed him as manager of her caravan. A wealthy widow, she was said to have married him when she was forty and he was about twenty-five. Khadijah provided support and comfort for Muhammed when he received his revelations and his call to prophecy. She is considered the first convert to Islam. marriage to Khadijah was monogamous for twenty-five years. After her death, for various reasons (cultural, political, social, and humane) he married ten more wives and kept two concubines (Denny, 1994).

Another significant female in Islamic history was 'A'isha. After Khadijah's death, `A'isha was the youngest, and reportedly the favorite wife of the Prophet,

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[9] "Report", "event", "news" A literary form that communicates the custom, usual procedure, or way of acting for the Prophet Muhammad.

and as the daughter of Abu Bakr, 'A'isha had considerable political power. She is known best for having led an army in rebellion against the Caliph `Ali, who had been reluctant to accept her father as the first Caliph. A great number of *Hadith* are attributed to `A'isha. She left more reports about the Prophet than anyone else, and told stories of him long after his death. `A'isha is now viewed as the 'model woman' for Muslim Feminists - a symbol for women active in the public sphere (Denny, 1994).

Religious Knowledge as Intervention Strategy / Aid

I was intrigued and hopeful that there were so many elements of the religious texts which reflect favorably upon women and have emancipatory elements towards women's right to equality and education. In my mind, I thought that religious knowledge could be an advantage, a tool, in helping to persuade, negotiate, or resolve conflict that might arise when working with women's educational programs in Muslim communities. Yet upon further exploration and inquiry, I came to learn that the same religious sources (Qur'an and *Hadith*) can be used in favor of, or opposition to the education of women. The issues lie within the interpretation of religious text, which is not the role of the "outsider," but of religious leaders.

My assumption was that women in Islamic history such as Khadijah and `A'isha could serve as positive female role models for the women of today. And indeed, knowledge of the existence of these women in Islamic history may serve to dispel some gender stereotypes among development workers. Perhaps a discussion of `A'isha as a learned woman may even have some influence on local resistance to women's educational programs.

Similarly, elements of the religious texts may serve to support women's programs, such as: Qur'anic references to the status and roles of women; Qur'anic references to the importance of education for both men and women; and women's rights within Islam. Yet the issue of interpretation of the Qur'an as discussed earlier arises. Just as certain factions use Qur'anic verses to defend women's right to equality, other factions use verses from the Qur'an to support the argument for the subservience of women to men (DGIS: 7).

> "I think working with women in Islamic context is very... I can't really say in Islamic context... it's very complicated. But it's very easy to use Islam against women. In these countries, you can use it very liberally, or you can use it very conservatively."
> (Magda Ahmed - Interview, April 11, 1995)

As the editors of *Against All Odds* so clearly state,

> The question that arises is: how far can religion be used strategically without it, sooner or later, reinforcing those very attitudes and norms that have been oppressive? And is there a qualitative difference between women's "strategic use" of religion and its "misuse" by other groups, including fundamental ones? Are they not all operating from within the same parameters? (1994: vii).

The editors of *Against All Odds* advocate for the understanding of religion because, "... it is often used by the dominant classes in society to maintain their control over people, especially women" (1994: v).

The question then, is not whether or not religious knowledge could be used as a tool for promoting, negotiating, or resolving issues within Muslim women's educational programs, but <u>who</u> has the right to use this knowledge in

such a way. *"Outsiders" must refrain from considering this knowledge as a tool or a strategy for implementing educational intervention.*

> It's wonderful for someone to go and read the verses of the Qur'an with villages and say, yeah... but you have to see also that villagers think of you as... I mean, who are you to read us all of this? We are Muslim, we are born with Islam, we know all this, and we don't need you. You have to see at what time is best. Maybe after six months or after three years, when the community knows... then, if you talk about these issues they respect you. I think the knowledge is excellent, but I think my worry is the approach you take." (Homa Sabri - Interview, March 12, 1995)

The debate among Muslims as to whether or not contemporary Islam should be seen as an emancipatory force will continue. In fact, the DGIS study states confirms that many Muslim women believe that the study of the formal doctrine can make a contribution to women's rights as the knowledge gained will enable them to defend their formal rights. The DGIS study emphasizes,

> ...emancipatory elements in Islamic doctrine should be clearly emphasized and cultivated and used as a bias for improving the position of women. Elements which are detrimental to women should be studied with a view to discovering ways in which Muslims have attempted to overcome them, so that strategies which have already been employed may serve as examples for other situations or countries (DGIS 1993:38).

Yet the study continues to discuss, "Non-Muslims can only adopt a discreet approach with regard to this theological discussion. It is not their place to become involved in Islamic theological debate" (DGIS 1993: 88). As Mainus Sultan, one of the sources for this study concluded,

> Religious knowledge is a powerful tool. However, you study Qur'an and you think you understand the explanation, and probably you do... it doesn't mean that you will be able to use those knowledge. Where you're going to use it... the people who are your audience, they may not recognize you as a legitimate source.
> (Mainus Sultan - Interview, April 10, 1995))

Summary

This study has discussed briefly some of the gender issues in the literature pertaining to women, education, and Islam. Four rich case studies were presented which represented a sample of the variety and diversity found in women's educational programs in Muslim communities in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Senegal, and Yemen. Sources discussed their respective development initiatives, and identified the key gender issues that confronted their work in women's education. The issues repeatedly identified among the four cases were resistance to changing female roles, curriculum and content of the program, social norms, organization and logistics. Each source then discussed how development workers, programs, and participants confronted and resolved these issues. Some of the varieties of resistance were discussed, and different methods of resolution were identified.

In addition, this study discussed the role of the educated, Western, non-Muslim, "outsider" and important issues that must be taken into consideration when working with Muslim communities. An in-depth understanding of ourselves, and others is instrumental in working towards any form of "effective" program outputs. Commitment, mutual understanding and respect are of utmost importance for anyone working with people of other religions and

cultures. "Outsiders" need to be aware of their own biases, beliefs, and values in order transcend their own knowledge and understand other perspectives. Development workers need to analyze the different nuances of Islam's impact on women's lives in different regions of the world, and avoid the dangers of generalizations about the status, well-being, and happiness of women in Muslim societies. Rather than defining what oppression means to Muslim women, we need to provide room, and create space for women's voices to be heard, in an attempt for self-definition.

Additionally, individuals undertaking development work with Muslim women have the responsibility to educate themselves about the culture, the religion and it's implications for women. A familiarity with Islamic knowledge and religious texts can inform the "outsider's" understanding of the many diverse perceptions and practices within Muslim communities. However, is important to understand that the theological debate belongs to Muslims, not "outside" change agents. As the Persian poet Sanai noted, the possession of religious knowledge without moral or spiritual virtue is like a thief, and asserted that if a thief comes with a lamp, he will be able to steal more precious goods (Haddad, Haines, and Findly 1984: 49).

As the DGIS study notes, it is essential for women to participate in education and study Islam, with a view to learn about their rights and developing a healthy self-image (DGIS 1992: 72). Thus, as non-Muslim outsiders, we can inform ourselves about Islamic knowledge in order to facilitate the process for others to investigate the debate independently. Muslim women though must be independently responsible for acquiring knowledge of Islamic writings in their search for liberating elements of the religion. As "outsiders" become more informed regarding the sensitivity of the gender issues at hand, they can continue to work towards alleviating potential conflict at the design and

planning stage. Given the many benefits of the education of women, the challenge facing educational planners is how to overcome barriers to educational opportunities for women, so that these benefits can be realized.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW INFORMATION

Case Study # 1 - AFGHANISTAN

Source:	Homa Sabri, National Officer
Organization:	UNICEF - Afghanistan
Program:	Skills Training and Literacy Project in Mazar-i-sherf
Interview Date:	March 12, 1995 - Recorded and Transcribed

Case Study # 2 - BANGLADESH

Source:	Mainus Sultan, Program Organizer & Literacy Trainer
Organization:	FIVDB, Bangladesh
Program:	Women's Adult Literacy Program in Guian Ghat
Interview Date:	April 10, 1995 - Recorded and Transcribed

Case Study # 3 - SENEGAL

Source:	Babacar Mboup
Organization:	World Vision, Senegal
Program:	Education & Literacy Program in Louga, Senegal
Interview Date:	April 26, 1995 - Recorded and Transcribed

Case Study # 4 - YEMEN

Source:	Magda Ahmed
Organization:	USAID - Yemen
Program:	Support for Women's Association - Yemen (SWAY)
Interview Date:	April 11, 1995 - Recorded and Transcribed

Additional Interviews/Discussions

Source:	Debby Fredo
Organization:	TOSTAN - Senegal
Program:	Literacy & Numeracy - Senegal
Interview Date:	April 24, 1995 - Recorded

Source:	Leila Ahmed, Director Women's Study Department and Professor, University of Massachusett - Amherst
Interview Date:	May 16, 1995 - Recorded

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

for Development Workers and Practitioners
involved with women's educational/development programs
in Muslim communities.

Name:_____

Title:_____

Date:_____

Authorization to quote?_____

Authorization to record interview?_____

Bio-data of interviewee -
Ed., Experience, Gender, Nationality, Religion, etc...

1. Could you please tell me briefly about your experiences working with women's educational/development programs in Muslim communities?

- Location

- Muslim % within community

- # of Muslim women

- Ages

- Educational Background

- Goals of program

- Duration

- Management of Program (USAID, etc...)

2. Were there any specific situations from your experiences in which gender became an important issue surrounding your work with women?

3. In what ways were these issues dealt with? What was the intervention strategy?

- With whom?

- How?

4. Do you feel that a greater awareness of issues which may confront development practitioners (who work with women's educational programs in Muslim communities) would be important prior to project involvement? Why?

5. What do you think is important for practitioners and development workers to know and understand as non-Muslims working in educational / development programs for Muslim women? Why?

Religious knowledge important to know...

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Potential gender issues which may arise when working in women's programs in Muslim communities.
- Examples of how gender issues can be addressed and confronted together with the women and the community.
- Qur'anic references to the status and roles of women
- Qur'anic references to the importance of education for both men and women.
- Issues regarding interpretation of the Qur'an
- Islamic way of life (values, traditions, rituals, beliefs)
- Positive female role models in Islamic history
- Women's Rights within Islam
- Islamic Feminism
    - modern trends
    - fiction and poetry
- Gender Issues training models

6. How and when would you propose this training or learning might have or should take place?

APPENDIX C

KEY GENDER ISSUES

For use as a springboard for discussion during interviews

A) ACCESS - Are women restricted access to educational programs?

B) SEX SEGREGATION OF EDUCATION - Co-ed or separate education for women and men?

C) SEX OF TEACHER/FACILITATOR - Can men teach an all-women's class or program?

D) RESISTANCE TO CHANGING FEMALE ROLES - This could manifest in specifically male opposition based on local traditions related to honor and shame, resistance from religious leaders or other community organizations?

E) SOCIAL NORMS - Who attends? Who is expected to attend? Are there social codes of behavior for women?

F) SUSTAINABILITY - Is there a possibility for women to sustain their education/literacy?

G) ORGANIZATION/LOGISTICS - Program planning, time, location, etc...

H) EFFECT ON FAMILY LIFE - positive and/or negative?

I) CURRICULUM OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM - Is the content of program acceptable or appropriate?

Of the above 8 gender issues addressed in the literature, what are the five most important/prevalent issues dealt with in your experience with women's programs in Muslim communities?

Place letter of top 5 key gender issues RANKING in order importance/relevance

First _____
Second _____
Third _____
Fourth _____
Fifth _____

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